

## Music Heals All Forms Of Misery

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Relationships:	<a href="#">Lan Zhan</a>   <a href="#">Lan Wangji/Wei Ying</a>   <a href="#">Wei Wuxian</a> , <a href="#">Jiang Cheng</a>   <a href="#">Jiang Wanyin &amp; Wei Ying</a>   <a href="#">Wei Wuxian</a> , <a href="#">Lan Huan</a>   <a href="#">Lan Xichen &amp; Lan Zhan</a>   <a href="#">Lan Wangji</a> , <a href="#">Lan Qiren &amp; Lan Zhan</a>   <a href="#">Lan Wangji</a> , <a href="#">Lan Yuan</a>   <a href="#">Lan Sizhui &amp; Lan Zhan</a>   <a href="#">Lan Wangji &amp; Wei Ying</a>   <a href="#">Wei Wuxian</a> , <a href="#">Jiang Fengmian/Yu Ziyuan</a> , <a href="#">Junior Ensemble (Módào Zǔshī) - Relationship</a> , <a href="#">Jiang Cheng</a>   <a href="#">Jiang Wanyin &amp; Jin Ling</a>   <a href="#">Jin Rulan</a> , <a href="#">Jiang Cheng</a>   <a href="#">Jiang Wanyin &amp; Jiang Yanli &amp; Wei Ying</a>   <a href="#">Wei Wuxian</a> , <a href="#">Lan Huan</a>   <a href="#">Lan Xichen &amp; Nie Mingjue</a> , <a href="#">Meng Yao</a>   <a href="#">Jin Guangyao &amp; Nie Huaisang &amp; Wei Ying</a>   <a href="#">Wei Wuxian</a> , <a href="#">Meng Yao</a>   <a href="#">Jin Guangyao &amp; Nie Huaisang</a>
Characters:	<a href="#">Modao Zushi Ensemble</a> , <a href="#">As in everyone from MDZS is in this</a> , <a href="#">Unfortunately those who died in canon are still dead :(</a> , <a href="#">Dafan Wen solidarity - Character</a>
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# Music Heals All Forms Of Misery

by [idontknowwhatimdoinghalfthetime](#)

## Summary

Two years after the downfall of Jin Guangyao, two individuals are sick and tired of seeing the cultivation world hurt Wei Wuxian even after being cleared of his crimes. So they decide to show the world the truth from all sides. The beautiful and the ugly. Whether or not they are forgiven by the demonic cultivator, in the end, is to be seen. But they know this needs to happen for him to heal.

Maybe it'll be easier to digest if it happens... through song? (\* ౮°) ( - ు )

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GREATLY INSPIRED BY: Mo Dao Zu Shi: The Musical by ILikeReading101

That fic is AMAZING! Please go give it a read!!

- Inspired by [Mo Dao Zu Shi: The Musical](#) by [Loveable\\_Psychopath](#)

# Happy Birthday, To You!

## Chapter Notes

I know I have two other stories I'm working on, but this fic has been in my head for a while and has been begging to be released. As said in the summary, I was inspired by Mo Dao Zu Shi: The Musical by ILikeReading101. So go and read that fic. If you love it as much as I did, then maybe you'll like mine as well!

But rest assured, my storyline is different and so are the songs I have chosen.

Unlike my other fics, the chapters for this one will be long (like really long. The first chapter was 11 freaking pages). And since I have two others that are still unfinished, I am strongly verging on the decision to update this story once a month only. We'll have to wait and see though, you never know.

Without further ado, enjoy!

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See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

The sun shines through the rice paper blinds of the Jingshi and illuminates the features of a handsome young man. He is comfortable and relaxed, enjoying the softness of the bed he is lying on.

The jet black hair spread out on a silky white pillow contrasts with milky white skin and light grey eyes. A soft smile adorns the young man's face as he enjoys the calmness and serenity of the room.

The slim yet toned individual is Wei Wuxian, and today is his birthday! It has been two years since his resurrection, and life's been pretty good. He eloped with Lan Zhan, the love of his life; A-Yuan is alive and well; Wen Ning is out enjoying the world as he deserves; and he basically adopted a rag-tag group of juniors, including his nephew, who doesn't hate him anymore!

So in actuality, life's been more than pretty good. It's been *really* good.

He had woken up to an empty bed, but it's most likely because his perfect husband was called to take care of some important sect leader business. Knowing that fuddy-duddy, he's probably berating himself for not being able to wake up the necromancer with kisses. Wuxian, however, feels bad for whoever summoned Lan Zhan because not only did the great Hanguang-Jun purposely clear his schedule for the day, but he also gets cranky when he doesn't get to spoil his Airen\*. When he's grumpy, he makes sure those at fault for it are highly aware of their wrongdoings. For someone who is considered one of the most venerated cultivators in all the sects, he sure can be a big baby at times.

But er-gege doesn't need to worry! Unlike last year, Wuxian swore to himself that this birthday wouldn't be a downer. He had spent his previous birthday suffocating in self-loathing and depressing thoughts that he tried to hide behind tight smiles and jars of wine. It hadn't fooled anyone except maybe the juniors, but even then, A-Yuan can be much too attentive for Wuxian's liking.

He truly is a Lan.

And that thought couldn't make Wei Ying prouder. He's beyond grateful and happy that his sweet little radish was able to grow up big and strong in an environment where he was safe and sound.

He indeed owes Lan Zhan the world.

With a loud yawn and a satisfying stretch, Wei Wuxian gets up to start the day.

Step 1 of Have A Happy Birthday: Go enjoy the town!

The plan for the day was to spend the morning with Lan Zhan, the afternoon with Jingyi and Sizhui, and then go for a night hunt with all four juniors after a romantic dinner with his husband. He had specified that he didn't want any presents this year, that spending time with his loved ones was present enough (~~even if the one he most wanted to see still had trouble being in the same room as him~~).

He woke up earlier than usual, meaning that although he might not have all morning with his baobei, he'll probably still have half of it.

After making the bed, he gets dressed and sees that his oh-so-caring Wangji had breakfast ready for him at the table, heating talismans covering the plates to keep the food warm (an invention made by yours truly). So he digs into his favourite morning dishes, grabs a pouch of money which he probably won't use, his dizi, and goes to hit the town.

His husband has made him promise to always have a pouch of money on him, alongside one that contains whatever he would need during emergencies. The emergency Qiankun Pouch wasn't something he fought against, it was a brilliant idea, one he wished he had implemented in his past life, but the money pouch was a different matter. He hadn't worked for the money, and even though the Lan Sect is one of the wealthiest clans of the cultivation world, he's always been stingy when it comes to spending anything on himself that isn't necessary. Furthermore, Lan Zhan and his sect have already done so much for him; to take their money after not doing anything to earn it didn't (and still doesn't) sit right with him. But he's never been able to say no to the mighty Hanguang-Jun's puppy eyes (as he said before, the Bearer of Light is such a baby), so he let Lan Zhan win that argument.

When getting dressed, he didn't wear his usual set of robes; instead, he decided to wear his "commoner robes" to blend in and remain unnoticed when browsing through Caiyi Town. He wants to enjoy himself without being recognized as the infamous Yiling Patriarch or the husband of Hanguang-Jun. He is in no way ashamed of his marriage to the youngest Twin Jade of Lan. It's the opposite. If anything, he worries that he has further damaged Lan Zhan's reputation, but as always, he decided to be selfish and marry him anyway. Lan Zhan had also wanted it, though! Wuxian had made triple sure of it! All he's ever wanted was to make those he cares for happy, and if marrying A-Zhan made the white-clad cultivator happy, then who was Wei Wuxian to obstruct him from that (again)?

He thanks a young lady for a free sample of her homemade red bean buns and decides to buy some Tanghulu for everyone to have before the night hunt later. As he approaches another stall, he hears someone say his name. Confused, he turns around to see who it is that recognized him regardless of his disguise.

In actuality, no one has called out to him; instead, they are talking about him. A group of three men are surrounded by a crowd of people, recounting some made-up story of when they faced Wei Wuxian, the Yiling Patriarch, the one and only Grandmaster of Demonic Cultivation.

"His eyes were crimson red, and his voice could freeze rivers!" States a black-bearded; middle-aged man. Wuxian can tell that he is a storyteller, and a good one at that, through the way he captivates the audience and retains their attention through the seamless transitioning of his voice and his hand gestures. He is confident and in his element. Despite the fact that everything he is saying is complete bullshit.

Wuxian may have a terrible memory, but from the sounds of it, the three men (he has named them beardy, bushy, and baldy) are declaring that they fought him after he came back from the dead (~~the second time~~). Since all that happened at the Guanyin Temple, he hasn't had many confrontational brawls with any cultivators, other than that one time someone tried to assassinate him, but that definitely wasn't any of the storytellers. He would know since he was the one that got rid of the hitman without any witnesses around. Not even Lan Zhan knows about it, but Wuxian hadn't deemed it essential information to be known since it was just as he said: an attempt. The person failed, so he hadn't needed to worry his husband over such trivial things.

"He was just as everyone says! Fierce and deadly, with a smile so sharp and a laugh so chilling that beasts and ghosts alike can do nothing but bow down to him!" Continues bushy, an older man with very bushy eyebrows.

Beardy nods his head with conviction while baldy (his name implies his appearance) proceeds where his companion left off.

"We didn't think we stood a single chance against him. But, I mean, think about it! Who, other than the bravest and strongest of cultivators, have ever lived after a fight with a demon such as him?"

Wuxian raises a skeptical eyebrow while the enthralled crowd hums and nods in agreement.

"So, how did you survive?" Someone asks.

The raconteurs take a second to lock eyes conspiratorially and then look around as if to make sure no one else listens in on what they're about to divulge to the evergrowing crowd. This is ridiculous and dramatic on levels that even Wuxian wouldn't stoop down to. But, despite

himself, he wants to hear what nonsense they have made up. Such antics induce the crowd to move closer; anticipation riddles the air as they metaphorically and literally are at the edge of their seats due to the established suspense.

Baldy places his left hand near the right side of his mouth as if to tell a secret. "The evil Yiling Patriarch has a weakness!"

Wuxian freezes as the audience gasps and draws even closer to the speakers. Wei Wuxian desperately hopes that they haven't figured out his fear of dogs. If they did, this new chance at life that he has been given would end up being so much shorter than his previous ones.

"His husband! The great Hanguang-Jun!"

Everyone is now confused, including Wei Wuxian who has his head tilted to the side. There is no way these idiots will claim that they also fought against Lan Zhan or fought with Lan Zhan against the Yiling Patriarch.

Seeing the bewilderment, beardy takes over. "The Yiling Patriarch may have supposedly been cleared of his crimes, but us common folk have not received any proof! He has been playing nice because he doesn't wish to be condemned to death again."

"And so whenever his husband appears, he reverts to his fake good-naturedness," explains baldy.

"We only survived because the righteous and pure sect leader of the Lan clan came to our rescue!" Finishes bushy.

The crowd seems to find this explanation acceptable and starts heatedly conversing.

"I still believe that the Grandmaster of demonic cultivation bewitched Hanguang-Jun! There is no way that such an honourable man would allow the demon Wei Wuxian to marry him!"

"I agree! I agree! To think that after everything that monster did, he would still be welcomed with open arms into the home of the most noble-minded cultivators in all of the cultivation world. It's preposterous!"

"I heard that they weren't allowed to get married."

"It's true! The Lan elders fought against it, but the Yiling Patriarch threatened them into submission!"

"Even to this day, we have no way of putting down such a dog!? How dare he be allowed to walk amongst us, to breath our same air!"

"The air of our children!"

The crowd, now turned mob continues their rantings while the storytellers collect money from pleased listeners.

"You three are so brave to have stood up against him!"

"You flatter us," voices beardy in a humble manner.

"We were just lucky that Hanguang-Jun was able to keep a miscreant like Wei Wuxian on such a tight leash," adds baldy.

"Did you all know that today is his birthday?" Questions bushy.

"But of course!" responds an elderly woman in disdain. "It has been considered an ominous day since his death!"



"Now that he has returned, there is no doubt that he will decide to exact his revenge on the cultivation world for killing him in his last life!" Announces someone else.

"Are you sure? Last year nothing happened."

"Pshh! That's most likely because he was busy trying to strengthen his control over those at Cloud Recesses."

"But they showed him! Some say that they carved an additional rule into the Wall of Discipline especially for him!"

"Yes! That was thanks to the great Lan Qiren. Such an upright man! "Stay Away From Wei Wuxian" is what's carved into it."

"But wasn't it taken off?"

"Oh, I hope not! Think of those poor young disciples! They wouldn't know any better!"

"Either way, he stayed away from Caiyi last year, and it seems as if he hasn't dared to come again this year."

"Good. Wei Wuxian is a scum that should know his place! Even us common folk deserve more respect than him."

More frustrations and insults are shared before the crowd disperses.

Wuxian froze in place the moment the first comment was made after the raconteurs' tale ended. His face is now carefully blank as he makes his way out of town.

This is...This is fine. Step 1 of Have A *Happy* Birthday might've been a flop, but he won't give up. He...He swore to himself. And Lan Zhan didn't marry a quitter.

No. Apparently, he married a dog instead.

A demon.

A monster.

A—

He shakes his head as if that could shake away the negative thoughts plaguing his mind.

He takes a deep breath as he begins to climb the stone staircase leading to the entrance of Cloud Recesses. Half the morning has already gone by, so perhaps Lan Zhan is finished with whatever responsibilities he had to take care of. He really *really* hopes so. His husband always makes him feel better (~~even when he doesn't deserve it~~).

Okay, okay. Step 2 of Have A *Happy* Birthday: Spend time with your perfect Lan-er-gege.

Making it to the top of the staircase, he heads towards Lan Zhan's office, planning on peeking inside the room to see whether or not the older man is busy. Unfortunately, on his way there, he runs into Lan Qiren. Hoping that maybe if he keeps his head down, the elder won't see him or might instead decide not to waste his time speaking to him. It's usually the latter, but today it seems that his luck is nonexistent, which doesn't really surprise him anymore, seeing as this has been his normal since his parent's death.

Teacher Lan greets him coldly. As per usual.

"Wei Wuxian."

He receives no bow but respectfully gives one nonetheless. After everything he has done to the older man's family, he deserves nothing but hate and contempt from him.

"Lan-Xiansheng\*."

"Where were you?"

He straightens his posture but keeps his eyes trained to the ground. He wasn't expecting such a question; usually, Lan Qiren has no care for where he is or what he does. As long as Wuxian doesn't bother him or others during classes, it matters not to the bearded man.

"I had decided to spend my morning in Caiyi Town."

"Of course you did," scoffs the Lan.

"Was there something you needed, Shifu\*?"

"Yes."

In his peripheral vision, Wuxian can see that Lan Qiren is stroking his beard. This means one of two things. Either he's lost in thought, or he is about to tell Wuxian to do something that the younger one better accomplish to a T.

"I know that today is your day of birth, but I ask that you not be selfish for once and leave my youngest nephew alone for the day."

Wuxian tightens his jaw but makes sure that the rest of his body stays in a relaxed yet upstanding posture.

"He might be your...Husband. But first and foremost, he is a sect leader, a nephew, and a brother. So you cannot possibly expect him to cater to you at all times. If anything, you should be the one catering to him."

Wuxian doesn't miss the way the other practically spits out the word "husband" as if it pains him to utter it. He's also not ignorant to the subtle way that Lan Qiren is referring to him as a servant.

"I suggest you find a way to entertain yourself that doesn't include Wangji. Is that understood?"

He nods his head stiffly, not trusting his voice to remain as steady as his physical appearance.

"Also, I presume that you did not disgrace my sect during your frolic in town. Am I correct in my assumption?"

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*The crackling of electricity. The smell of burnt flesh. Heavy breathing from two very different individuals: one in pain and the other enraged.*

*"You had better not disgrace this sect Wei Wuxian! Fengmian may have brought you into my home, but you are no son of mine."*

*Crack!*

*Grunt. (Please-)*

*Crack!*

*Grunt. (~~Please.~~)*

*"Y-yes, Madame Yu."*

*Crack!*

*Grunt. (~~Stop.~~)*

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"Yes, Shifu."

"Hm. You may go."

He bows. "Thank you, Shifu."

They head in different directions.

Wuxian will not let what was said bother him.

He has been put in his place many times throughout both lifetimes. It should no longer hurt. If anything, he should expect it. He's used to it.

Yes... He's used to it.

This is fine. He will just skip step 2 and go right to the next one.

Step 3 of Have A Happy Birthday: Don't bother Lan Zhan, instead-

You know what? Maybe he should change the name to something more realistic. Impractical expectations lead to constant disappointment.

Step 3 of Have A Decent Birthday: Don't bother Lan Zhan, instead hang out with your favourite Mini Lan's!

Morning classes should be over by now; perhaps he can spend time with Sizhui and Jingyi until lunchtime? Surely they'll be able to bring his mood back up to how it was this morning (~~before reality decided to rear its ugly head~~)!

As he expected, the Lanshi\* is empty. So he decides to ask the next Lan disciple he sees if they've seen where his son and best friend have gone.

Once again, his good fortune is nowhere to be seen. And so, the person he ends up asking is one of the Lan elders.

Every single one of them despises him. The reason? Lan Zhan and Lan Xichen discussed amongst themselves and believed that the elders held too much power for a group of closed-minded people. It was even discovered that a few of them had been friends with Su She, going as far as to aid him in recruiting more disciples from the Lan sect to join Su Minshan after Wei Wuxian's death.

Although it was the Twin Jade of Lan's' decision, all elders blamed Wei Wuxian for their loss of power. At that point, Wuxian had been too tired to stand up for himself. Lan Zhan would probably do it for him if he asked. As sect leader, he'd only have to do it once, and everyone would most likely leave Wuxian alone. But he doesn't need to add more to his Zhang fu\*'s already full plate.

He can't remember which particular elder this is. As a matter of fact, Wuxian doesn't believe he has ever spoken to this man before. But no matter, the other seems to have a lot he wants to say.

"You are *not* to disturb the disciples of this here sect," he orders harshly. "You are but a disturbance to them. They are good children and do not deserve to be tainted. Especially not by the likes of *you*."

Face deliberately neutral, Wuxian bows. "This one apologizes."

"You will do more than simply apologize!" He snaps. "You will go to the Library Pavillion and copy the rules of the Wall of Discipline twice. I would tell you to do two hours of kneeling at the very least, but the sect leader has forbidden such punishments for your pathetic self."

"..."

"Do you have nothing to say?"

"...I-"

"Yes, Zhuren\*. I will copy the rules twice and burden no one with my presence for the rest of the day."

Wuxian digs his fingernails into his palms until they pierce the skin. However, he doesn't feel it considering deep humiliation and embarrassment are drowning his pain receptors.

"Yes, Zhuren," he repeats between clenched teeth. "I will copy the rules twice and..." he falters in apprehension. It's one thing to believe such a conviction, but it's another to be forced to repeat out loud one's insecurities. "And..."

"And?" Stresses the older man in impatience and irritation.

What happened to "be patient"? Doesn't the other know that that rule is on the Wall of Discipline?

"...And burden no one with my presence for the rest of the day," finishes Wuxian emotionlessly.

"Get out of my sight."

Wuxian does as told.

He copies the rules four times instead of two, skipping lunch, and decides to forget about his birthday plans. It turns out Lan Zhan *did* marry a quitter. Well, he always has been good at disappointing both himself and others. It's nothing new.

All he wants to do is hide away in the Jingshi.

He has to "burden no one with his presence for the rest of the day" anyway. So he's simply listening to orders given to him by his senior. He pretends to be asleep when Lan Zhan comes into their room to have dinner, and later on, gives the excuse of being too tired to join in on the night hunt.

"I'm getting old er-gege," he explains with a huff and an exaggerated pout. "I ran around all day in Caiyi town, listening to storytellers and speaking to merchants! I even got everyone some Tonghulu! It's in my pouch on the table."

"Wei Ying..."



"Go on ahead, Lan Zhan. I know the juniors were looking forward to the night hunt."

His lovable, incredible, angelic husband looks at him with unhidden concern. But before he can say anything else, Wuxian stops him.

"If you apologize for not being able to spend the morning with me, *one more time*, I swear to you, Lan Wangji, I *will* throw this pillow at you."

He receives an amused huff and the softening of Lan Zhan's eyes as a response.

"If Wei Ying insists."

"I do. Now go have fun Lan-er-gege. Don't forget the Tonghulu!"

The two of them are sitting on their bed, Wuxian's back against the headboard and legs crossed while Lan Zhan sits in front of him, feet on the floor, posture as proper as ever. Wangji leans forward, cups his husband's jaw, and kisses him. He then kisses his cheeks, forehead, nose, eyebrows, closed eyelids, and then the lips once again. He doesn't stop until his beautiful Wei Ying is a blushing, giggling mess.

"Go on now, baobei. I love you too."

Lan Zhan stands but presses one last kiss to his forehead.

"Happy birthday Airen."

Wuxian bites the inside of his cheek to prevent his eyes from watering.

"Thank you Zhang fu."

With one last look filled with adoration, Lan Zhan grabs Bichen and the Qiankun Pouch from the table, and exits the room.

Wuxian is alone.

Again.

As he *should* be.

He climbs under the covers into a fetal position and closes his eyes, wanting nothing more than for this day to hurry up and come to an end.

He's never liked his birthday anyway.



"I can't take this anymore! He has gone through so much! Too much! He deserves to feel happy and safe here. This place is supposed to be his home!"

"I agree with you, but what can we do about it?"

"..."

"Oh...Oh no. *Absolutely not*."

"I haven't even said anything yet!"

"I know that look. I don't like that look."

"But..."

"...Ugh. *Fine*. But what?"

"I have a plan!"

"Is it a good plan?"

"...I have a plan!"

"Oh gods, I'm going to regret this, aren't I?"

"Not completely... But he might never forgive us."

"What does this plan of yours entail?"

"Justice! Revelations! Forced confrontations! And...Music!"

"You should've been named Shagua\* instead."

"Oh, come on! He'll finally get the closure he needs. And everyone will treat him the way he *should be* treated! Don't you want what's good for him?"

"You know I do."

"Then what's the issue?"

"I would give you a very long and resigned sigh if I could."

"Sooooo, is that a yes?"

"Unfortunately."

"YAY!!"

"Shut up and let me sleep."

"We don't actually need sleep tho-"

"SHUT UP."

## Chapter End Notes

Baobei = treasure/darling/baby

Airen = spouse/lover

Xiansheng = mister/sir/teacher

Shifu = master/respectful form of address for older men

Lanshi = orchid room/a classroom in Cloud Recesses

Zhang fu = husband

Zhuren = master/host/owner

Shagua = idiot/fool

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I like it so far. Do you? I know there were no songs but it's coming, trust me!

Did anyone realize how the two Kamoji's in the summary represent the two voices that converse at the end of the chapter? Any guesses on who they might be?

I know I'm the one who wrote this and all, but the nerve! of! that! Gusu! elder! when he basically forced WWX to call him Master. Insinuating that he is the owner of him?!? I pissed myself off, lol.

Drop comments, theories, or suggestions down below! I love reading them!

If you see that I made a mistake in relation to the Chinese terms I use, please let me know!

I hope you have a great day/night! 💜💙💜

# Welcome One And All! Most Of You Are Going To Hate It Here.

## Chapter Notes

Surprise! I dumped the "update twice a month" decision! I've tried the whole "update schedule" thing, but it's not for me. I'm going to write what I write and post it whenever I feel like it. Cause I made this chapter a couple of days ago, and I don't want to wait till Halloween to post it, so here you go!

I would also like to mention that I had whiplash when I realized that I had gone from like 6 kudos to almost 90 within the span of 2 days. THANK YOU ALL!! Super happy you guys like it! I'm excited to continue :D

WARNING: It does mention a bit of gory stuff.

Happy reading!

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See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

Wuxian loves his husband very much. He would do absolutely anything for him. Cross oceans. Climb mountains. Travel to the ends of the earth. But at this current moment, all he wants to do is sleep. So could his beautiful Laogong\* *please stop* with the shaking of his shoulder!? At this point in his new life, he has an internal clock set to his baobei's sleeping schedule, meaning that he is positive that it is *much* too early for either one of them to be awake.

Did he and the juniors just now come back from the night hunt? If they did, that's good. Wuxian is glad they made it back safe. He hopes they enjoyed themselves, had fun, learned new things, all that jazz. He'll get them to tell him all about it, and then he'll thank his husband for taking the kids out. But if the Lan sect leader doesn't unhand him this instant, the adoration he has for him will have some competition. In other words, in this fight of Lan Zhan versus sleep, sleep is winning. Sorry, not sorry, baobei.

"Wei Ying."

The voice is faint but slowly becoming clearer as Wuxian approaches consciousness.

"Too e'rrlllyyyy," he whines.

"Wei Ying. Please?"

He sighs but goes to throw the covers off himself nonetheless.

...But for him to do that, he would need covers to take off. And a pillow. As well as some extra blankets for when he gets cold. Actually, while he's on the topic, he has one question.

Where the *heck* is his bed???

Also, if it isn't too much trouble, Wuxian would like it if he could get an answer to the following question as well:

Where the *heck is he*???

He quickly sits up, all exhaustion dispersing as if it wasn't ever there, to begin with. The soft bed he knows and loves is nowhere to be seen. Instead, he is sitting on a hard stone floor. One that is *much too* familiar. He looks up to see Lan Zhan hovering over him, looking mildly worried. The past two years have loosened Wangji up to the point where he allows the change of his facial features to be observable. Or at least a little bit more than he used to. In any case, that's what Wuxian assumes; how else have Jin Ling and Ouyang Zizhen been able to decipher Lan Zhan's moods?

"Are you alright?" Asks Wangji as he helps Wuxian stand up.

Instead of answering, the younger man looks around to see if his assumptions are correct. They are, *goddamnit*. He hates it when he's right when he really doesn't want to be!

They're at the Burial Mounds. Inside the Demon-Slaughtering Cave, to be exact.

He wishes his pillow could've been transported here with him. That way, he'd be able to groan loudly into it like the man-child he shamelessly is. But at the same time, can anyone blame him? He has very few good memories of this place. For instance, the last time he was here, there was basically a second siege.

"See! I told you it's the Yiling Patriarch's fault! He's here as well!"

Whelp. It seems he *can* be blamed. But he already knew that. It's what he's lived through for most of his existence. With a resigned sigh, he takes a better look at his surroundings. He and Lan Zhan aren't the only ones here. From what he can see, there are the Sect leaders of the 4 Great Clans (Lan, Jin, Yunmeng, & Nie), the sect leaders of all the other smaller clans, a handful of disciples from each of them, and some commoners as well. He knew that his cave was spacious, but it couldn't've possibly held this many people. There's something else at work here.

He closes his eyes and takes a deep breath, allowing his senses to block out everything except the resentful energy that still permeates the area. No matter how many years it has been or the number of times the place gets spiritually cleansed, it can never be truly free of resentment.

When he was first thrown into the Burial Mounds all those years ago, the only thing that lived here was the noise of the dead and suffocatingly heavy demonic energy.

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*The screeching*

*The howling.*

*The shrieking.*

*The blood.*



*The pain.*

*The pain.*

*The **pain** .*

---

\*\*\*\*\*

It filled up every crack and crevice, covered every rock, branch, and skeleton. The resentment was so cold it burned, seeping into anything it could latch onto. The ground, the piles of bones, ~~him~~. It would sink its teeth into the remaining flesh that hung on the recently deceased souls; those poor, unlucky souls that would forever have the Burial Mounds as their resting place.

One couldn't think with all the noise. One probably wouldn't want to even if they could. In a mountain-sized coffin where everything either wants to consume you or be a part of you, given the chance to take a moment and *think*, would only lead to the loss of one's sanity.

Unless you're Wei Wuxian.

Or at least that's what people believe.

He's never told anyone what it was like to be trapped there for those (~~horrifying, nightmarish, terrifying~~) 3 long months. He never plans to. But for all the times his terrible memory has helped him forget, there's one thing it never could.

The voices of the dead never ceased. They overlapped, begging, pleading, crying and screaming (~~always screaming~~). But, when given the chance, one ends up understanding that there is more than just the dead that inhabits the physical embodiment of hell on earth.

Those hundreds of voices. All of them come from one. Single. Mouth.

The Burial Mounds is more than a place. It is an entity.

A living creature made of death, with thousands of ways to share its one objective: Pure, catastrophic, destruction.

It'll sing its song of propaganda for whoever will listen.

But for those special few...

(More like that special one. ~~Wei Wuxian. The single survivor. The only master of the dark arts. The sole apprentice of the creature of death.~~)

The special ones who survive its tricks and trials. It's lies and truths. Who survive their own craving (~~their own want, their own need~~) for death. A prize is given to them. They are granted the tools needed to attune themselves with the wavelength of the Burial Mounds.

*"That godforsaken flute? Apparently, he named it Chenqing. "*

If one pays attention, it'll teach its song so it can be played by someone other than itself.

*"Did you see? The music he plays can wake the dead!"*

A tune forcefully placed within the back of one's mind. A tune that Wuxian has never forgotten.

*"When he whistles, it does the same thing! He will end up being a danger to us all, I assure you."*

He had heard a shadow of its melody the moment his bones shattered on impact with the Burial Grounds stone floor.

He had heard it clearly the day he first placed his lips upon a dizi made of bamboo.

It followed him as he crawled out of the creature's belly.

It was used by him the night he massacred his first Wen supervisory office.

He enjoyed it as he played with Wen Chao and his faithful mutt, Wen Zhuliu.

It became stronger as he fed it the souls of Wen dogs.

But on the day he created the Stygian Tiger Seal, the tune stopped.

The song of the Burial Mounds is the desire for the annihilation of all that lives. It is moulded as a message in the form of notes, octaves, and chords because that is the only way it can manifest itself in a manner understandable to other beings.

The Burial Mounds is a creature that shared its message with Wuxian. He translated it into the sound of a flute. The Burial Mounds could only escape the borders of Yiling through its song of propaganda and Wei Wuxian himself. However, the moment the demonic cultivator formed the seal, it had a much stronger vessel. One where a musical piece wasn't enough. One where its true voice was free to come forth and share its message to whoever touched its new palm-sized body.

It is for that reason Wei Wuxian once said that the Stygian amulet was bound to no one. Before he had created it, he was the only one who had comprehensible access to the Mound's' message. Although Wen Ruhoan had acquired a piece of Yin Iron, and the resentment it exuded was that of the Burial Mounds, it could only communicate through noise. The same noise that those who were trapped in the Burial Mounds heard until their last

breath. Screaming, crying, screeching, begging, howling, pleading, and additional sounds that are so horrific they couldn't possibly be put into words.

All this to say that Wuxian never forgot the song of the Burial Mounds since he uses it every time he plays his dizi. He also never forgot the true voice of the place he (and seemingly everyone from the cultivation world and their mother) is stuck in at the moment. Meaning that as he blocks everything out, he attunes into the deep, low humming sound that oozes from the walls, dirt, plants, and air of the realm that will forever be tainted by evil.

The last time he was here, he ignored it because it wasn't required for the situation they had been in. Plus, Wuxian hadn't needed any extra distractions as he and Lan Zhan were leading waves of corpses out of The Demon-Slaughtering Cave.

But now? He and, if he has to guess, maybe 300 and something other people have been magically summoned to a place of malice, sorrow, and bittersweet memories. He definitely wasn't the one to bring everyone here, so he has no choice but to ask the Burial Mounds itself if it is at fault for the current situation.

"Wei Ying, is everything alright?" Questions a now concerned Lan Wangji.

"I'm fine er-gege, I just need to concentrate, that way I'll be able to figure out what's going on. So give me one second."

His eyes might be closed but he's positive that his husband gives him a nod of understanding.

Seeing as remaining standing isn't doing anything to help, Wuxian decides to sit back on the ground and places himself in a meditative position. He then evens out his breathing and reaches out to the resentment.

**{Is this because of you?}**

For a couple of minutes, he receives no response. He extends his telepathic and auditory range and waits until he hears a chilling disembodied voice.

***{Hello, again, little one. It's been a while.}***

**{Did you, or did you not, bring us here?}**

***{ What need would I have of bringing you here when I am always with you through other means? }***

Wuxian sighs in frustration. He's usually all for riddles and games, but he desires nothing more than to start and end any form of conversation as quickly as possible when it comes to this particular entity.

This voice reminds him of too many memories he would rather forget.

**{If it wasn't you, then do you know who *is* responsible for this?}**

He is supplied with a breathy goosebump-inducing chuckle as a response.

**{Are you going to be useful, or am I wasting my time?}**

***{ What you're doing, and have been doing for the past two years, is wasting your full potential. I know you remember that delicious power we once shared. If you- }***

**{Annnd this conversation is now over! Thanks for nothing.}**

***{ How dare you! I am-}***

He doesn't hear the rest of the sentence because he blocks it out like he did his surroundings. Before opening his eyes and standing up, he slowly extracts the frail bond he had created in order to speak with the formless voice. If he closed off the mental communicative pathway abruptly, it would allow the remaining power of the Burial Mounds to sneak through his defences and possess him. Although it isn't as much as it used to be, the Mound's power is strong enough that if it were to take control of Wei Wuxian, it would most likely take Lan Zhan, Lan Xichen and Jiang Ch-- Sect leader Jiang to take him down. It would also be extremely painful on Wuxian's part to have the creature of death govern his body. It would be as if he became a human-sized version of the Stygian Tiger Seal. A vessel strong enough to be the literal voice of the Burial Mounds.

The concept makes Wuxian shiver.

If something like that ever happened, it would be as if his body was a costume for the Burial Mounds to wear. It's not the nicest of thoughts.

Lan Zhan looks at him expectantly, but he shakes his head in reply.

The two then allow themselves to survey and absorb the chaos that surrounds them.

Everyone is speaking above each other; there is cursing and yelling. Someone is crying, and everyone is confused, irritated, and (some more than others) scared.

Wuxian gives his husband a small, understanding smile.

"My love, I know you hate this part of your job, but you know what you have to do. You're their Chief Cultivator, after all."

With a small pout that no one other than his Airen and brother would notice, Lan Wangji decides to take control of the situation. He takes out one of Wuxian's talismans and throws it in the air. It is a small-scale version of a signal firework, but instead of exploding into the

colour and logo of a sect, it lights up the room, making it seem like shimmering stars cover the ceiling and walls until it disperses without a trace.

It does the trick. All eyes are now trained on the dependable and trustworthy Chief Cultivator, everyone waiting in anticipation for a proper explanation. Lan Zhan opens his mouth to reassure the crowd in his stoic Lan way when someone beats him to it.

“Are you all finished? Your whining is beyond annoying.”

Confusion and fear deepen as hundreds of eyes search frantically for the source of whoever spoke. It sounded like a female, her voice slightly croaky, but soft and cool, eliciting goosebumps among all who heard it.

It’s disconcerting to many since it seems to be coming from every direction.

“Oh, come on, Qing, don’t be mean! They’re technically our guests!”

Another voice, this one bright, friendly, and cracks here and there as if still in puberty.

“You’re point?”

The other voice sighs in light exasperation.

“Who’s there?! Show yourself!” Demands a cultivator from the Nie sect.

“It’s cute how they think that they can command us.”

“Qiinnnggg, be nice *pleeease* ?”

Wuxian's brows furrow as his index finger taps lightly against the tip of his nose.

*Why do those voices sound so familiar...?*

"I agreed to your idea, but I never agreed to treat any of them kindly. Except for master, of course."

"If you would be so kind, who is your master exactly?" Politely questions Lan Xichen.

"Only the best human being the cultivation world has ever seen!" Responds the bright voice.  
"He's brave! Sweet! Kind! Compassionate! Funny! And-"

"And none of you asshats deserve him." Interrupts the other voice.

"Except for Hanguang-Jun and the juniors?"

"Except for Hanguang-Jun and the juniors."

The four teenagers perk up at being mentioned while Wangji's eyes slide over to his husband's thinking form.

As Wuxian is about to ask a question of his own, the friendly voice speaks up once again.

"Okie Dokie! Everybody, please make your way deeper into the cave, and we can get started!"



Before protests can be made, an icy breeze makes its way throughout the room, making everyone shiver.

“We won’t ask again,” states the darker voice.

Begrudgingly the large crowd does as told. Those who were last here are bewildered by the fact that the place seems to be neverending. Much bigger than last time. Wuxian has noticed the same thing.

“Curiouser and curiouser,” he mumbles to himself as he follows the procession with Lan Zhan and the juniors at his side.

They finally come to a stop as they are faced with a massive screen. If Wuxian had to guess, he would say that it’s about 117 feet wide and 97 feet tall. The screen is projected onto a back wall which is facing 29 round tables.

Each table has between 10 to 20 chairs each, except for one table that is directly under the screen in the bottom right corner. It only holds two chairs.

**(Basically, the room tables are placed like [this](#), so everyone has access to the screen. And the screen is this [size](#). There are 29 sects present, with 16 disciples, per Sect, this includes the Clan leaders. I hope it's not too confusing.)**

“You will find that the middle of each table contains a nameplate with your sect on it. Find the one that corresponds to you.”

“Also! Your seats are assigned as well! We made sure to do that because about 50 of you that are here are simple commoners who don’t belong to any sect.”

“Everyone hurry up and sit your ass down, except for the following people: Lan Qiren, Zewu-Jun, Hanguang-Jun, Sect Leader Jiang-”

“Oyang Zizhen, Jin Rulan, Lan Sizhui, Lan Jingyi-”

“Wei Wuxian, and Wen Ning.”

Wen Ning walks out of a shadowed corner he was hiding in at the sound of his name. He looks sheepishly at Wei Wuxian, who waves him over with a smile. He’s technically the Lieutenant General of the Ghost General, meaning that Wuxian knew that Wen Ning was with them the moment he had fully awoken.

As A-Ning makes his way towards Wei Wuxian, the room bursts into noise; objections are made left and right.

Wei Ying clenches his fists into the sides of his robes in an attempt to hide his anger and irritation. How dare these people say such slanderous things about sweet, kind Wen Ning! His (basically) little brother doesn’t deserve to be talked about in such a manner! He would speak out, but he doesn’t want to attract more attention towards himself until he figures out who the people behind the unknown voices are.

“Shut. Up.”

The command is said slowly and calmly but has an immediate effect. There was no reason for the Mysterious Meany (as Wei Ying is calling her) to raise her voice because those complaining felt inexplicable fear creep up their spine the moment she spoke the first word.

“Ooookayyy!” returns the happy voice. “So the people my companion and I named are to sit at the table nearest to the screen. Once everyone is situated, then and only then, will we reveal ourselves.”

It takes a couple of minutes for everyone to find their seats, but they manage. To his surprise, he and his husband are not sitting with the Lan sect. As a matter of fact, the names that were called out all sit at his table. Lan Zhan sits at Wuxian’s right, with no one is at his left. Directly across from him is Lan Qiren, who has no one at his right but has Sect leader Jiang

at his left. Beside him sits Jin Ling, Lan Jingyi, Lan Xichen, Wen Ning, Ouyang Zizhen, and Lan Sizhui is beside Lan Zhan. So technically, they are sitting in a semi-circle at a circular table, he and Lan Xiansheng\* at opposite ends. All the tables are the same, most likely placed this way so that everyone can see the screen properly.

Ten minutes pass before everyone is seated, attention honed in on the only table with two chairs.

“Master, have you figured it out yet?” Unexpectedly, it’s Mysterious Meany who softly asks the question. Voice bathed in...affection?

The crowd, having learned their lesson, wait in silence.

“Chenqing and Suibian.”

Wuxian’s answer echoes throughout the room. He makes sure his voice is levelled and holds no exploitable emotion. Although it probably won’t do anything, he doesn’t want anyone to think that he planned this or is any less clueless than they are. Ignoring the heavy gazes of those at his table, he keeps his eyes trained on the only empty one.

Two pleased hums reverberate against the large walls, silencing those who were about to share their unwelcomed thoughts.

He doesn’t know what they’re playing at, but he recognizes the fact that they want him to continue.

“I’ll admit, you threw me off at first. The Burial Mounds wouldn’t answer my questions so that in itself was odd.”

Faces whiten in shock and fear at the revelation that the Yiling Patriarch can not only control the dead but also speak to the Burial Mounds as if it was a...A living creature!

Wangji's knitted brows express his disconcertment. He had not known that his husband had that capability. Earlier, he had assumed that the other was reaching out to the souls and ghosts that still reside here in hiding or perhaps calling out to Wen Ning.

"Then Suibian went on a rant about how great I am, but ultimately the fact that he called you Qing was what led me to figure it out, along with the fact that the huge screen is made up of both of your energies. Also, for some reason, your voices seemed familiar to me."

One of the chairs at the empty table starts to glow as the other exudes fog.

"Our master is a genius!"

"We wouldn't expect any less."

Finally, the two voices take physical form.

[Chenqing](#) looks just as he thought she would. While others are surprised by her softness and beauty, Wuxian is not. Although the support she gives him when he uses her is deadly and powerful, she's always offered him comfort when he's needed it the most. For instance, she would attempt to soothe him as much as she could after he clawed out of the Burial Mounds, quieting the voices of the dead for him when they were too much. Whenever he was anxious or scared, all he would need to do was hold her tightly or twirl her in his hand to make him feel better. Chenqing, to him, is lethal yet calming.

[Suibian](#), on the other hand, isn't entirely what he expected. Whenever he thinks of his trusty sword, he unconsciously reverts to the thought of a child. Its name is basically the embodiment of immaturity, which is no fault of its own; that was all Wuxian. But what can he say? At the time he was, more or less, a stress-free kid who didn't think too hard about much. So when he saw his sword in human form, Wuxian believed that it would be a child. Something carefree and ageless, with endless energy. But that's not exactly the case. Suibian is definitely bright and energetic, but he is in no way a child. He is tall and lean and looks between 26 or 27 compared to Chenqing, who seems as if she can't be any older than 20. His clothes are opposite of the black robes of his companion, and so are his facial features. While she holds an emotionless countenance, he wears a beaming smile. Suibian radiates an

arrogant confidence that achingly reminds Wuxian of himself before he ruined everyone's lives.

Their appearance leaves him breathless and queazy.

“You all must have a bunch of questions,” comments Suibian as he addresses the crowd but keeps his gaze on his master.

Chenqing crosses her arms; even those in the back can feel the pressure of her glare. “We won't be answering any of them.”

Suibian shakes his head, looking as exasperated as an older brother can look towards their gothy little sister.

“What Chenqing means is that we'd rather show you before answering any questions you might have. Isn't that right, Qing?”

“No.”

Suibian offers a “well watcha going to do?” shrug and claps his hands twice.

The gigantic screen comes to life.

## Chapter End Notes

Laogong = husband

Xiansheng = mister/sir/teacher

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I promise you that the next chapter will definitely have music! Also, I saw someone called LavenderBunny1412 add a description to their bookmark for this fic. and it made me laugh out loud. I hope you enjoy the rest of the story!

I decided to be lazy and replace a description of the weapons with art pieces instead. I do not own the art, but you should go support the artist! I am terrible at describing voices so for Chenqing just imagine Raven's voice from Teen Titans, and for Suibian think of BeastBoy. :D

Drop comments, theories, or suggestions down below! I love reading them!

If you see that I made a mistake in relation to the Chinese terms I use, please let me know!

I hope you have a great day/night! ❤️💛💚

# Raise The Curtains!

## Chapter Notes

Gooosssh, I can't do it! I'm just as excited as you guys when I write a chapter, and so finishing it and not being able to share it just seems cruel. So I'm going to be nice and give you this chapter tonight and another one tomorrow. This means that this weekend I'll be posting chapters for my other fics and this one will have to wait a few days (we'll see if I actually stick with that plan, lmao).

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So I'll be altering the songs a bit, whether that be by changing a few words here and there or completely skipping some verses. I'll also change how the song goes. For instance, the one in this chapter is fast and the real song is just a whole lot of screaming. However, in my fic, I change it up, during certain instances.

I'll be honest some of the songs I found by searching for the specific type of song I needed, so there are some I personally don't actually like (take the song for this chapter as an example), but if you like them then enjoy!

Without further ado, the moment you've all been waiting for! Happy reading! :D

SONG: This Is The End Story by Woe

~~~~~

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

Music fills the air. The rapid strumming of a guitar is quickly accompanied by sets of drums, the combination creating an intense sound that vibrates the nameplates on all the tables. The giant screen that was once dark is no longer so.

**The sky is grey and cloudy, an obvious sign that a storm is coming. The scene is a bird's eye view; the clouds in the sky pass by with the same speed as that of the guitar sounds playing in the background. Suddenly the clouds disperse and the viewpoint is similar to that of a bird nose-diving down to the world below. Before it can crash, however, it stops and shows two weapons strewn on the ground of a bloody yet deserted floor.**

“Isn't that the Burial Mounds?” Questions a commoner of the Unclean Realm.

“It is,” responds a cultivator from the Jin sect.

“This is 16 years ago. Directly after the siege against our master,” explains Suibian.

**The weapons shake violently as the music intensifies. They then transform into their human forms. It’s Chenqing and Suibian, and they’re looking at the remains left of the Dafan Wen’s village from the entrance of the Demon-Slaughtering Cave.**

Wuxian’s brows furrow as Wen Ning inhales sharply.

“Uncle Ning?” worries A-Yuan.

“It’s just...That was our...What’s left of our...”

“Our home,” answers Wuxian in a quiet yet levelled voice. He strays his gaze away from the screen towards his weapons that are sitting in the corner. His eyes narrow as he tries and fails to figure out what their angle is in all this. Then, his attention quickly returns to the large display as the figures on the screen begin to sing.

*‘...Huh. Definitely didn’t see that coming.’*

**Their faces are grim and angry, voices matching their emotional status as they deliver a duet.**

**This is the end of the story. The part that you don't want to hear. The hero is dead.**

**The scene changes to Wei Wuxian in his original body, right arm in the air with the Stygian Tiger in his hold. Chaos surrounds him, background blurry but face clear for**



**all viewers to see. He is smiling. But it is painfully sad; eyes welled with unspoken emotions.**

“Am I the only one that thinks Senior Wei used to look really cool?” Mumbles Jingyi.

“Shut up,” demands Jin Ling as he elbows the talkative Lan.

“Ow! Can you not Mistress Ji-”

The next scene silences him and brings about a tense air among those sitting at his table.

## **The atmosphere burning.**

**The background clears up as thousands of ghosts and zombies swarm towards the amulet in the Yiling Patriarch’s hand. The inhuman sounds they make are nothing compared to the bloodcurdlingly agonized scream of Wei Wuxian as he is buried under them all.**

Gasps of shock and horror fill the room, while others mutter semblances of “good riddance” and “serves that demon right”.

Lan Sizhui’s eyes are wide as he covers his mouth with his hands; Zizhen looks like he’s going to be sick; Jingyi can’t look away, and Jin Ling looks over at his Dajiu with pained confusion. He then turns to his Jiujiu, whose face shows no emotion. However, upon closer inspection, it can be seen that he has turned pale, and his jaw is clenched tightly.

If Wen Ning could breathe, he would surely be hyperventilating. He had heard that Wei Gongzi had died a terrible death, but he hadn’t known that he had basically been pulverized into a powder while still alive. His master had gone through so much pain and suffering during the time they had known each other before he and his sister had given themselves up to the Jin’s. Did the poor man’s end truly have to be the same?

Lan Zhan is extremely pale and shaking slightly. He goes to grab ahold of his husband's hand, but before he can, Wuxian is out of his seat, staring daggers at his spiritual and demonic weapons.

“What. ***The hell*** . Is this?” The one who is speaking is no longer Wei Wuxian but the Yiling Patriarch. The man who could take down armies single-handedly and whose calm yet terrifying anger brings men to their knees.

Suibian and Chenqing look at him head-on with relaxed but serious expressions.

“This has to be done, master. They must realize the transgressions they have, and are still, committing towards you.” States Suibian as he leans back into his chair.

“It is time that everything is brought to light. You might hate us by the end of this, but we intend to display all the secrets, insecurities, hopes, dreams, and sufferings of everyone in this room.” Adds Chenqing. “In particular, yours, your enemies, and those who are closest to you.”

“Absolutely not.” Decrees Wuxian, eyes tinged red and appearance as cold as stone.

The juniors are surprised; none of them have ever seen Senior Wei this angry before.

Suibian and Chenqing stand and bow respectfully towards Wuxian. “We have spent our existence proudly serving you, master,” declares Chenqing.

“Unfortunately, we will not be complying with your request. We will most likely end up disregarding any commands you order upon us during our time here,” finishes Suibian.

Wuxian does not respond; instead, he raises a single eyebrow.

During the Sunshot Campaign, this specific look would have anyone blurting out any and all of their secrets in hopes of being spared from the Yiling Patriarch's wrath. It still has the same effect to this day, although he's hardly used it since his return from death.

The two figures remain in their bowing positions.

Wuxian has been backed into a corner, and he hates it. This somehow feels like a betrayal. The two beings who have seen and experienced his darkest and happiest moments are doing the one thing he hates the most: Exposing his vulnerability. And they're not even being subtle about it! *Nooooo*, instead, they create an obnoxiously big screen so that everyone can see every nitty-gritty detail. Not to mention the crisp surround sound.

"Is that truly your final decision?"

Their bows deepen as they reply with a "yes, master".

Wuxian says nothing more. He returns to his seat, body stiff and filled with tension; the weapons return to their chairs as well.

Lan Zhan wants to take away his husband's stress because he understands how badly this must be affecting his Airen. To have one of your worst moments displayed for all to see must be...He can't even imagine. He does, however, feel the familiar grief that latched onto him for 13 long years, trying to seep its way back in. But with the person of his affection angry but **alive**, beside him, he does not want to revisit these emotions. So he takes hold of Wuxian's hand as he had initially planned, and waits until he has his husband's attention; he then brings it up to his lips.

He receives a weak smile, but it fills him with warmth nonetheless.

**The narrative fragmented, words are disjointed.**

**The scene shifts to the inside of Koi Tower. Jin Guangyao is kneeling in front of an assembly of people, the most noticeable ones being Jiang Yanli, Jiang Wanyin, Jin Guangshan and Madam Jin.**

Jiang Cheng inhales sharply at the sight of his sister and looks down at his nephew to see pure awe colouring his face.

“Jiujiu...Is-is that?”

“Yes,” he responds, voice soft and understanding.

“She was...She was really pretty.”

“The most beautiful there was,” he sighs.

He spares a quick glance towards Wuxian, who looks pained with his eyes trained to his lap.

**“I regret to inform you, but it has been reported that Wei Wuxian has murdered Master Jin Zixuan,” discloses Jin Guangyao.**

Wuxian takes a deep breath, and Wen Ning hunches in on himself.

**The Yunmeng siblings stand up abruptly while the room fills with the sound of disbelief and speculations.**

“What?!”

“That can’t be! A-Xian wouldn’t do something like that!”

“Poor Lady Jin, to think she had been bewitched by the Yiling Patriarch as well,” remarks a Jin cultivator.

“To die at such a young age, alongside being a widow, all because of her own sworn brother...” An old woman sighs and shakes her head sadly as she continues. “To have her child orphaned before even turning two months old, on top of everything else, how terrible!”

“It’s a good thing those cultivators exterminated that demon Patriarch when they did!”

“If anything, they were much too merciful!”

Lan Xichen takes hold of Lan Jingyi’s arm to keep him seated as Jiang Cheng does the same for his nephew. The two teens are brewing in anger and frustration at the statements being thrown around.

Wuxian pretends that he doesn’t hear them. However, while he might not show it, he doesn’t have the power to pretend the words don’t hurt. They are all true, after all.

The commenters suddenly feel a shiver run up their spine. They turn to see the Chief Cultivator give them the deadliest of looks. They quickly shut their mouths and return their attention to the screen.

**“I apologize, Jiang-Gongzi and Maiden Jin, but it’s the truth. It has been revealed that he had greeted Master Zixuan’s welcoming party with hostility, cursing Jin Zixun and setting the Ghost General upon the unsuspecting Master and his fellow disciples.”**

**The scene changes to Qiongqi Path, where the Yiling Patriarch is surrounded by 200 archers and a smirking Jin Zixun. His nostrils are flared in anger; his hand clenched tightly to his dizi. He is visibly in a fight or flight mindset, yet there’s also a hint of pained acceptance in his expression.**

“That’s no welcoming party. That’s an ambush! And I thought there were only about 40 cultivators who attacked Senior Wei at Qiongqi path, not 200!” Remarks a distressed Jingyi.

“And Guangyao’s report is complete bullshit! Dajiu never gave Jin Zixun that curse; it was Su She!” Adds Jin Ling.

Although he and his second uncle had gotten off on the wrong foot in the beginning, Jin Ling has spent the past two years getting to know him better and even learning from him. The evil man the world portrays him to be is not the type of person his Dajiu actually is.

“Plus, it was Xue Yang who took command of Wen Ning! He wasn’t in control of his actions!” Reminds Ouyang Zizhen.

“It is as the lyrics imply,” discerns Lan Sizhui. “The song states: ‘the narrative fragmented, words are disjointed’. Meaning that the song co-relates to what we see on the screen.”

Confusion and frustration clear’s from the faces of Sizhui’s friends as they absorb his statement.

“Well done, child,” praises Chenqing.

“Danngg Sizhui, you got *the* Chenqing to compliment you! Your wisdom knows no bounds!” Jokes Jingyi.

A-Yuan blushes at the kind words.

Those who heard the junior’s discussion and saw the obvious lie on the screen are bewildered. The stories they’ve heard and the story they are seeing aren’t matching up.

**The scene shifts to a dishevelled Jiang Cheng. His hair is undone, and he’s still wearing the robes stained with his sister’s blood. He’s in a room at Lotus Pier, throwing chairs,**

smashing wall ornaments and flipping tables while angry tears cascade down his cheeks. His voice replaces that of Suibian and Chenqing.

**I'm smashing apart every statue,  
concrete faces that weathered the  
storms.**

The faces of his dead family members pop up on screen one by one.

Sect leader Jiang keeps his gaze stubbornly towards the screen, Zidian sparking slightly, daring anyone to try and say anything. No one rises to the challenge. They would all like to keep their lives.

The scene then transfers to that of a young woman exiting the border of Lanling. Her pretty features are made visible as she turns to give one last look to the place she once called home. Her voice hardens with anger, as does her demeanour.

**The city is filling with poison like  
the air is somehow alive. Hope is lost,  
fading away into emptiness.**

“Uhh, who is that?” Asks Zizhen.

“That’s MianMian, otherwise known as Luo Qingyan,” provides Nie Huaisang.

The juniors look at him in surprise; they are slightly stunned that the Sect leader hasn’t gone on a scared and confused rant yet; spewing a continuous stream of “how did I get here? Does anyone know what’s going on? I don’t know! I don’t know!”

“Oh! Wasn’t that the lady that Senior Wei saved at Dusk Creek Mountain during the Wen Indoctrination?” Asks Jingyi.

Finally ending his streak of silence, Wuxian looks at the young Lan in confusion. “Who told you that?”

When he told the juniors the story, he had left that part out, glorifying Lan Zhan’s bravery and strength in defeating the Xuanwu instead.

“Oh...Uh, nooobody.”

“It was Wen Ning, wasn’t it?” Wuxian deadpans.

“If you already knew the answer, why ask?” Huffs Jingyi.

MianMian turns away, leaving her old life behind. Evident disgust intertwined with her singing.

**They Celebrate the steady decline.**

The display on the screen spins in a circle, transitioning seamlessly into a different scene. It shows the tear-stained face of the newly appointed Nie sect leader as he clutches to the fan his Da-Ge gave him during the last birthday he attended before his death. Grief is sown within his words.

**Crushing the facade of all dreams, I  
collapse from the weight of my  
nothingness. I realize that everything  
fails.**



**He flicks open his fan, raising it to hide his face and then quickly lowering it again. What was once an appearance of sadness is replaced with determination, eyes glinting with dangerous intellect.**

**It bores in me; I'm bored of it, aboard  
a ship that's sinking and burning.**

Viewers are speechless at the change in expression. They turn to look at Nie Huaisang, but he's whispering something to his right-hand man, not paying attention to the screen. Or perhaps he is but doesn't want to acknowledge it.

**The scene changes to a young Jin Guangyao as he picks himself off the ground in front of the steps of Koi Tower. He is covered in cuts and bruises; his outer robes ripped and torn; ankle sprained, and his wrist broken at an unnatural angle. He looks up at a retreating form. It's Jin Guangshan after having kicked his bastard son down the flight of stairs. Meng Yao dusts himself off and walks away with a limp; the sneers and laughter of passing Jin disciples assault his hearing and worsen his mild concussed headache.**

**My mouth fills with bile when I think  
of it.**

The scene then shifts to a smiling Meng Yao as he undergoes the name-changing ceremony.

**"You are now Jin Guangyao of the Jin Sect," declares Jin Guangshan.**

**Jin Guangyao stands from his kneeling position and turns to a clapping crowd. However, in his peripheral vision, he can see the distrusting gaze of Nie Mingjue before he whispers something to a smiling Lan Xichen and walks away.**

## How the hatred consumes me alive.

Lan Xichen had been in seclusion for the past two years. Being forcefully brought into this situation is both destabilizing and concerning. Seeing this specific scene inflicts further guilt and pain upon him.

*'How was I so clueless? If not for my ignorance against Da-Ge's warnings and concerns, he might still be alive today.'*

**The angle switches to look up at a sunny sky, which then shifts to the nighttime. As the angle returns to normal, the viewers can see that they are inside a dark room containing a lumped figure lying on its stomach in a bed. Then, it zooms in to show that it's Lan Wangji, his back covered in bandages, and his eyes closed as he cries silently.**

“Oh, Lan Zhan,” breathes Wuxian with sadness.

His husband softly knocks his knee with his own under the table.

“I am alright Airen, it is in the past.”

That does nothing to curb Wuxian's immense feelings of guilt.

“Who injured Hanguang-Jun so terribly?!” Inquires a random commoner.

“I bet you my right hand that it was the Yiling Patriarch!” Responds another.

In the corner of the room, under the screen, Chenqing mumbles something to herself.

“What was that Qing?” Asks Suibian.

“He’s both incorrect and a waste of air. If he truly wants to part with his arm so badly, I wouldn’t be disinclined in removing it for him.”

Chenqing made it so that no one but Suibian and the spoken-about man could hear her response.

Suibian chuckles and the man pales dangerously with a loud gulp.

**Hanguang-Jun clenches his eyes tightly as he sings, voice wavering in anguish.**

**How many lifetimes spent in agony  
tearing at words that won't rip? An  
image, permanent crushing the facade of  
all dreams.**

**The scene shows a flashback of Wei Wuxian leaning heavily against a stone wall in a small cave. His face is void of any emotion other than his continuous stream of tears, which does nothing but demonstrate his state of indescribable misery.**

The juniors are shocked. They’ve never seen Senior way so...So unlike himself. He’s a man of feelings and emotions; for him to be so alarmingly vacant is highly distressing.

As a way of reassuring themselves, they turn to their favourite senior but are met with a sorrowful-looking Chief Cultivator and a guilt-stricken Wei Wuxian.

**Hanguang-Jun is kneeling in front of Wei Wuxian, holding his hand, transferring spiritual energy. Both of their robes are covered in blood, the red contrasts significantly with the white of Lan Wangji's clothes, and although Wuxian is wearing red and black, parts of it are visibly soaked in blood. Lan Zhan lifts one of his hands to cup the cheek of the younger male.**

**“Wei Ying, it's going to be alright.”**

**“...”**

**“I'm sorry I wasn't there when you needed me at Qiongqi Path, but I swear to be by your side from now on.”**

**“...”**

**“Wei Ying? Answer me?”**

**“...”**

***“Please?”***

**Wangji receives no response. He tucks a strand of hair behind Wuxian's ear and then leans in closer to press a kiss to the other's forehead.**

**“Wei Ying... I love you.”**

Wuxian's breath falters as his eyes water.

**“H'gu'n-Jun?”**

**“Yes, Wei Ying, I’m here. I’m here, Xin ai\*.”**

“Don’t say it. Don’t say it. Don’t say it. Don’t say it.” Quietly pleads Wuxian to the version of himself on the screen.

The people at his table (except for Lan Zhan) look at him in confusion.

**“Get lost.”**

**Hanguang-Jun looks immensely pained.**

Wuxian looks away from both the screen and those at his table, hiding his expression.

*'You're such a fuck-up . You really don't know how to do anything right.'*

**“Wei Ying...It’s me. It’s-”**

**“Get. Lost.”**

**“Wei-”**

**“Get out of here”**

**“...”**

**“Leave me alone.”**

**The sounds of footsteps can be heard approaching their hiding spot.**

**“I saw them hide into the cave over here! Quickly! Let’s save Hanguang-Jun from that monster, the Yiling Patriarch!”**

**Voices of approval respond to the order.**

**“I will take care of this, Wei Ying. You need not worry.”**

**“Go away.”**

**“Wangji? It’s me, Xichen. Are you in there?”**

**Lan Zhan sighs deeply as he shakily stands up. He unsheathes Bichen and turns to look at the cave entrance, placing himself in a stance of attack, protecting the injured demonic cultivator.**

**He does not turn around as he utters the last words he’ll ever say to the younger man before he dies from the siege.**

**“I love you, Wei Ying.”**

**“...get lost.”**

**And with that, Hanguang-Jun goes on to attack 33 Lan Clan disciples to protect the love of his life.**

“Anyone would be lucky enough to garner the affection of the great Hanguang-Jun! And here is the Yiling Patriarch, the embodiment of evil, throwing that love away!”

“The Chief Cultivator fought against his own sect?!”

“Wei Wuxian enchanted him the same way he has done others. That’s the only plausible explanation!”

“I don’t understand why we have to see this. We are all already aware of the vermin that is Wei Wuxian. Why must we sit here and watch as he ruins the lives of all who don’t deserve it?”

“I don’t know...Did you not see Qiongqi Path? There was definitely an intentional falsification of information.”

“Yes, but that was Jin Guangyao. We all know that he was evil. That’s old news. It doesn’t, however, take away from the wickedness of the Yiling Patriarch!”

“Hear! Hear!”

“You all know that he can hear us, right?”

“He has no power here! Did you not see the way his own weapons disregarded his orders?”

“Would that not mean this would be the perfect time to get rid of him before he decides to do it first?”

As the conversations spiral into what may soon become a mob mentality, the juniors start to worry. They turn to Wei Wuxian, wanting to see how he’s going to put these people in their

place.

But to their bewilderment, he does nothing. His elbows are placed upon the table, his fingers intertwined with each other as he leans his mouth against his linked hands. His eyes are closed, making it seem as if he's asleep.

Wangji's gaze is on the crowd as he tightens his hand around Bichen, prepared to take it out at a moment's notice. Seeing their Sect leader, the Lan disciples do the same, including Lan Xichen, who looks exceedingly tired. Lan Qiren has a haughty self-entitled air about him as he watches and listens in on the people's words.

"Silence." Demands Chenqing in a cold tone, and all can do nothing but listen.

"Have you become a coward, Wei Wuxian?"

Wuxian's eyes open in surprise as he looks towards the person who questioned him with a familiar and incredibly missed irritation.

Jiang Cheng looks at him with indifferent annoyance, but there's curiosity buried underneath.

"You sit there and let them say these things. Do you no longer know how to speak for yourself?"

Wuxian offers him a small smile and returns his gaze to the screen.

"What's there to speak on?" He asks lightly.

The response confuses the Jiang sect leader, but the accompanied mumble shocks him.



“It’s not like they’re wrong.”

That catches Lan Zhan’s attention.

“Wei Ying?”

Wuxian ignores him.

The scene's point of view turns away from the fighting Lan Wangji, back towards the slumped Wuxian. It zooms in on his face, cuts and blood slowly disappearing as time seems to move backwards. When his face is finally clear, the display zooms out, showing Wuxian in the Burial Mounds looking out at the approaching group of cultivators there to execute him. The siege is coming.

So far, the music has been quick and fierce throughout the song, but it suddenly slows down. The instruments, however, do not lessen in their intensity. Wuxian turns away and walks deeper into the Demon-Slaughtering Cave. He leans his back against a wall and slowly slides down until he sits on the ground, arms wrapped around his knees. He hides his face as he sings, voice laced with despair.

**Succumb to pressure bearing down. The  
end, exhausted, I have found that loss  
is a fire that always burns.**

The scene then shifts to that of the beginning, Wuxian holding the Stygian Tiger Seal in the air. But there is no smile on his face. However, he does look sorrowfully peaceful.

**And with these words, I am consumed.  
Everything is undone. Let my place go  
absent.**

**He closes his eyes and flashbacks are revealed on the screen.**

**I gasp for air and choke on fumes.**

**Wuxian crouched down beside a horrified Jiang Cheng as they gazed upon the remains of their home after the Wens Burned it. There are piles of bodies everywhere—Tears cascade down his cheeks, eyes wide and horror-struck as his body trembles with emotion.**

Those who lived and survived the burning of Lotus Pier look away with grief-stricken expressions. Younger disciples offer comfort to the older ones. Jin Ling subtly leans into his uncle's side, and his uncle does the same; both say nothing.

The room is quiet, absorbing the horridness caused by the now wiped-out Wen Sect.

Lan Zhan turns to see that his husband is still in the same position, elbows on the table, body tense yet controlled. His breathing is even, a little too even. His only visible sign of distress is his clenched jaw. Although it might be assumed that he's exuding an air of indifference or acceptance, in reality, his despair is anything but hidden.

**Rot and shit.**

**A quick shift on the screen, there and gone.**

The scene transitioned so rapidly that only a few were genuinely able to see what was displayed—those who did feel a sense of foreboding and horror.

Pain and terror were featured on someone's face. It looked as if...As if live corpses were biting into them while they screamed soundlessly.

Jiang Cheng looks sharply at Wei Wuxian, whose eyes are glued to the screen, composure remaining in place.

## **Fear and failure.**

**Flashes of many faces pop up on the screen, all of them in some form of distress or another.**

**The dead bodies of Madame Yu and Jiang Fengmian.**

**The crying, angry, grief-stricken face of Jiang Wanyin; the scene zoomed in in a way that makes it seem like the viewers are laying underneath the yelling teen, only able to see young Sect leader Jiang's face and nothing else.**

Jiang Cheng remembers that moment with painful clarity. It seems like Wuxian did as well.

**The dead body of Jiang Yanli cradled in Jiang Wanyin's arms.**

**A thin crying 3-year-old being held by a limping old woman, surrounded by other elderly and disabled younger people, all are wearing worn-out and dirty robes.**

**A bowing Wen Ning and Wen Qing before they turn and walk away.**

Wen Ning gazes sadly at Wei-Gongzi.

*'You did not fail me and my family, Wei-Ge.'*

**The angry and anguished face of Lan Wangji as he and Wuxian fight at the Pledge Conference of Nightless City.**

Lan Wangji, not liking this quiet version of his husband, starts to rub his back. His Airen doesn't say a thing, but he does slightly lean into the touch.

**The blurred faces of a woman riding a donkey and a man walking beside her with a child upon his shoulders. The sound of laughter surrounds the trio.**

The scene then returns to Wuxian holding the Seal; his eyes are now open, and he has the same fragile-sorrow-filled smile on his face that the song had begun with.

**Fuck all this pageantry, I'll sing no more sweet words. Severed bones scream of silence. Come away, they sing, to the dust returned.**

**This is the ending.**

He closes his eyes once more in wait for his demise; the sounds of the shrieking dead assault all his senses.

**This is goodbye.**

The scene changes to an exhausted-looking Wuxian watching a blindfolded Jiang Cheng hike up a mountain.

Wuxian and Jiang Wanyin both become tenser but remain silent.

**This ends my confidence.**

**A 10-year-old Wei Wuxian staring at his feet as Madame Yu yells at him.**

**This ends my pride.**

**The Yiling Patriarch walking through a Wen supervisory office where he massacred everyone inside. He sidesteps deformed corpses, eyes crimson red, face cold and reserved.**

Faces pale, and two or three people throw up at the sight.

The Juniors look at the screen, turn to look at their Senior Wei, and then turn back to the screen. They can't believe these two people are the same person.

Wangji's stopped looking at the screen, attention all for his husband. Wuxian takes a deep breath and shifts so that his chin is resting on top of his linked hands. He looks angry and disgusted at whatever's on the screen.

**This is defeat.**

**The screen goes black. The music stops.**

For a moment, everyone is confused until a terrifying voice echoes throughout the room. It's coming from the screen. The voice is smooth and enticing but simultaneously low and sinister. It has a honeyed air about it, making all who hear it unconsciously lean in closer while their senses simultaneously scream "DANGERDANGERDANGER".

*{ Don't you desire power, little one? }*

“No,” is the pained, grunted response the voice receives.

*{ I can grant you anything you could ever dream of? Fame. Riches. Does that not interest you? }*

“Leave me al-” Wuxian gasps in pain as he struggles for air.

*{ Don't you wish to leave this place? }*

**Wuxian *whimpers*.**

The sound shocks everyone. Those who sit at his table turn to look at him to see his reaction. His hands are white and shaking from how tight he's holding them. No other part of his expression shows his distress.

*{ Don't you want revenge against the ones who have hurt those you love? }*

“I... *Yes*.”

**A petrifying chuckle.**

*{Such a good boy.}*

The music returns and the scene comes back to life, displaying the Yiling Patriarch in all his glory.

**This is a reckoning.**

**Wuxian's eyes are blood red, robes and hair fluttering in the wind as an eery tune dances through the air from the sleek dizi upon his lips. He stands before an army of Wens who seem confused by the fact that a single man was sent to fight against them.**

**Wuxian lowers his flute and shoots the soldiers a wicked smirk.**

**“Run.”**

**The Wens look confused. That is until they hear the inhuman sounds of the Yiling Patriarch's own army coming to do their master's bidding.**

**A massive wave of the undead appears behind him and charges towards the unsuspecting Wens.**

**Leaving no survivors.**

**The juniors are speechless, while those who have never seen the true power of Wei Wuxian are amazed and terrified.**

**I am now complete.**

**The screen goes black once again, and the music slowly quiets down until all instruments cease playing.**

**A beat of silence.**

**Another.**

**And then that godawful chuckle.**

**{ *Such a very good boy.* }**

## Chapter End Notes

Dajiu = the oldest of your mother's younger brothers

Jiujiu = mother's younger brother

Laoshi = teacher

Xin ai = beloved

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Reads Chapter once: I hate it.

Reads Chapter three more times: You know what..? It's grown on me.

But that's just my opinion, I want to know what you all think!

Drop comments, theories, or suggestions down below! I love reading them!

If you see that I made a mistake in relation to the Chinese terms I use, please let me know!

I hope you have a great day/night!! 



# The Man Behind The Mask

## Chapter Notes

Here's another chapter, as promised!

This one ended up being soooooooo much longer than I had intended (28 freaking pages!!??). But whatever, more for y'all to enjoy! It contains some elements from The Untamed and from the Novel MDZS.

Thank you for all the song recommendations!!! And the comments! You guyss I LOVE reading comments and theories, it makes this so much more fun!

WARNING: It gets a tad bit gory.

And it's saaadd :(

SONG: Human by Christina Perri

~~~~~

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

The room is quiet as everyone takes a moment to absorb what they've just seen.

So much was shown within such a short period of time. The juniors have so many questions. The other viewers have theories and opinions they want to share. Wuxian and those who made a screen appearance feel irritated, nervous and exposed. And Lan Zhan, along with others, are trying to wrap their minds around how the pairing of certain scenes with specific lyrics seem to insinuate that what they know isn't the whole truth.

For instance, Wuxian's death had been told many times over, both before and after he came back from the dead, and each reiteration of the story said that he had lost control of the seal, creating a backlash that killed him. However, Wei Wuxian's expressions and words that he sang near the end make it seem as if he was prepared for the backlash of the Stygian Tiger Seal.

Like he had known it was going to happen.

But that can't possibly be correct. Lan Zhan's husband wouldn't have... His Airen, although weak and mourning at the time, still had enough power to obliterate all who went against him during the siege. He died because there was an *overload* of power, hence the destruction of both Wuxian and the seal. *That's* what happened. That is what *has* to have happened. Or else...Or else...

Wangji doesn't want to think about that. He's asked Wei Ying in the past, in a way that was gentle and subtle, about his death. But his Airen responded that his memory is fuzzy; he does not remember his death or what it was like being dead. Hanguang-Jun is inclined to believe his Qingren \*, especially since Wuxian hadn't remembered Wangji's love confession before he went to attack his fellow Clan members to protect him. But still... the display was disturbing, to say the least.

"Soooo... Any questions?" Asks Suibian with all the elegance of a 12-year-old.

Chenqing facepalms herself as her companion is bombarded with responses from most people in the room. She lets him struggle with the fuss of the crowd until she's had enough.

"Silence."

She gives an unimpressed glare towards Suibian as everyone does as told. He laughs awkwardly in thanks and returns his attention to the viewers.

"What I *meant* to say was: does anyone have any questions they would like to ask *in an orderly fashion* ?.... Yes, you, Zizhen, go ahead."

"So let me get this straight. You're both the physical forms of Senior Wei's weapons and have forced everyone here to watch the truth of what occurred in the past, with the objective of making a whole lot of people pissed and uncomfortable?"

"Yes."

"Not exactly."

Chenqing gives an aloof shrug in response to the look Suibian throws at her.

"In legal and general terms, our master has been cleared of the crimes he was accused of committing 16 years ago. *However*, he hasn't been cleared of being considered a criminal by most of the cultivation world! He is burdened by guilt that shouldn't be his own and has lived both lives being treated in ways that he does not deserve, both before and after he became the Yiling Patriarch. We intend to put people in their place and to show the world who the real Wei Wuxian is!"

"It was either this or Suibian allows me to murder all those who do wrong by our master."

"But if she did that, then half the population would be killed, *soooo* I thought that this would probably be a better alternative, don't you?"

The juniors, with wide eyes, nod their heads enthusiastically while everyone else is left speechless.

Or at least they are for a few seconds.

"Just because the Yiling Patriarch was cleared of his crimes doesn't mean that he didn't injure his comrades during the war!"

"Or that he was the one who killed his sister and brother-in-law, leaving their child orphaned!"

"We all just witnessed how he hurt Hanguang-Jun with his ingratitude!"

"Not to mention his demonic cultivation is evil! Desecrating the corpses of the dead? Utterly deplorable!"

"What do you mean, "even before he became the Yiling Patriarch"! At the time, he was considered a master of the six arts! A prodigy in archery and swordsmanship! And he ranked fourth on the list of best-looking young men in the cultivation world!"

"I would like to think that if I weren't married, I would still have a place among that list, don't you agree, Lan Zhan?" Harrumphs Wei Wuxian with a pout.

The juniors snort and giggle; Wen Ning smiles softly; Jiang Wanyin rolls his eyes; Lan Qiren glares; Lan Xichen shakes his head with a small smile; Lan Zhan looks at his husband with an affectionate yet pleading look.

"Wei Ying..."

Wuxian grins widely. "Oh come now, Lan-er-gege! Life is too serious to be taken seriously!"

Seeing the Wei Laoshi they're used to, the juniors can't stop themselves from matching the grin.

"Even now, he thinks he's better than us!" Declares an outraged Jin disciple. "Laughing at our reasonings and tainting the minds of the younger generation!"

Wuxian's smile falters but quickly returns, albeit stiffer than it originally was.

"He *should* feel guilty! He's ruined the lives of so many! He doesn't deserve to have the happy, perfect life that he has now!"

Wuxian flinches slightly at the statement, but it's missed by his husband, who, if looks could kill, is in the middle of murdering whoever said that with his glare.

"*Hah!* The "happy, perfect life he has now"? He may have happy moments with his husband and the four children he has placed under his wing, but other than that, there is nothing *resembling* happiness in his life."

Chenqing's short and scornful laugh accompanied by her unforeseen statement surprises everyone.

"You all think you know our master so well? You have not even caught *a glimpse* of how deep his love and loyalty run!"

Jiang Cheng stiffens.

"Qing..." Gently cautions Suibian.

She ignores him. "You know *nothing* of his struggles! His hopes and dreams are so simple and easy to realize yet are shattered to pieces at every turn! The pain and suffering he has forced himself to hide, despite how all he's ever wanted was to be *truly* seen!"

The juniors are blindsided, and Lan Zhan looks heartbroken.

"Qing!"

"*You* who have all taken advantage of him! Both before and after his death! You who take and take *and take* until he has nothing to give, but still, he continues to give anyway! You who condemn him and treat him like dirt when he could easily raise the cultivation world *to the ground* but has **chosen** not to!"

Lan Wangji flinches while Lan Qiren, some Gusu elders and others who dislike Wei Wuxian, bristle at the concept that they would be so easily defeated.

"*Qing!*"

"NO! *They* are the guilty ones! *They* are the deplorable ones! *They* are the evil demons and monsters! *They* are the ones that do not deserve happiness! They know *nothing*, and he **allows them to!** He allows them to live in ignorance and bliss while he *suffers* again and again! In every life! In every way! He—"

**"*He. Has. Had. Enough.*"**

The Yiling Patriarch has spoken.

And he is *pissed*.

Those who witnessed his ire during his past life are quickly reminded of how intimidating and powerful he used to be. Most cower into themselves while others grab for their weapons with shaky hands.

Wei Wuxian's eyes are an intense scarlet; deep cold resentment surrounds his form. Face empty of playfulness and smiles; he resembles not a demon but a dark angel. While Mo Xuanyu's body is smaller and thinner than his original one, the edged handsomeness that demonic cultivation brought towards his old body has been replaced with untouchable beauty in this new one.

To those who aren't facing his fury, he is breathtaking.

To those who are, he is *absolutely terrifying*.

**"I do not appreciate your assumptions,** Chenqing. So do yourself a favour and cease speaking on things you shouldn't."

Chenqing looks well scolded, which is another surprise to all who are present. She bows to her master.

"I apologize for losing my composure," she dips lower, "but I do not take back what has been said. Everything uttered was the truth."

"You *dare* -"

"Master!" Interrupts Suibian in haste. "I understand you're angry, but we implore that you stop fighting us! We are doing this to help you."

"What you are *doing* is going against your master. You *do* remember what happened to those who crossed me in the past, do you not?"

The threat is anything but subtle. All watch with bated breath. Hanguang-Jun and Sandu Shengshou can't remember the last time they've seen Wei Wuxian like this. Like the Yiling Patriarch of sixteen years ago.

The juniors are dumbfounded. Who is this person, and what have they done to Wei Laoshi?

"Senior Wei looks badass," whispers Jingyi to Jin Ling. The younger can do nothing but nod numbly in agreement.

*'So this is the man whom the whole cultivation world feared...He is nothing like the Dajiu who runs away in fear of the smallest of puppies!'*

Suibian sighs deeply.

"We do master. But we also know you best."

"What did I just say about assumptions?"

"That is not an assumption; it is a fact. For instance, every lie you tell is always accompanied by two truths."

Wuxian's comeback dies in his throat; eyes widen in stupefaction.

Suibian continues. "You laugh instead of crying, and you cannot remember the last time you were unrestrainedly happy without the self-doubt caused by others affecting you."

"That's—"

"You assume the last time you were happy was when you were with your parents, but even then, you can hardly remember what they look like."

"You-!"

"We understand that you hate this. You hate that we are peeling back all of your layers for everyone to see, but things will continue to worsen if we don't. Perhaps not in the exact ways they did in your previous life, but still... I'm sure you understand the specific implications I am insinuating." Suibian's eyes harden. "I believe that if I said them out loud, you wouldn't hesitate in destroying me, even though I am the only object you have left of your old life before the burning of Lotus Pier."

Wuxian closes his mouth abruptly; teeth clashing as he lowers his head; face pale but anger still clearly present.

"Wei Ying...?"

Wuxian tenses.



Lan Zhan is so concerned that it can be audibly heard in his voice. Wuxian feels guilty for making his Baobei worry.

Jiang Cheng has never seen anyone silence Wei Wuxian like this before. When Jiejie would quiet him, it was through kind words and soft touches his reaction vastly different than the one Wanyin had just witnessed. His mother would do it through scoldings and sharp remarks, but he himself had never learned how to do it. During the war, he had the most trouble getting Wuxian to talk, more than anything else.

*'That really should've been my first clue....'*

The juniors are thinking over everything they know about their Laoshi in hopes of seeing if there has ever been a crack in his demeanour. While they're doing that, Lan Sizhui is looking at his Baba\* with a slightly creased brow. The way he's staring, it would seem as if he's hoping that if he stares long enough, the older man's secrets will spill out, ready to be picked up and looked through by himself and his Fuqin \*.

Wen Ning has seen his master suffer in the past. He's beheld Wei-gongzi's vulnerability, but even then, he had known that the other man had still kept an emotional barrier around himself. Wei-Ge was always on guard, even against those who wanted nothing more than to love and care for him. Wei Wuxian insisted that he and Jiejie call him brother, yet he acted as their protector, a shield for them and the rest of the Dafan Wens, to hide behind. A shield that would absorb the hate and anger of the cultivation world in their stead. Whenever they attempted to care for him as they did each other, he would refuse, only ever accepting their help when A-Yuan was around.

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*“Remember, little radish, when doctor Qing-Jie takes a look at you; you need to listen well! Okie Dokie?”*

*The 3-year-old bobs his head up and down with a wide grin.*

*“Okie Dokie Xian-Gege!”*

*Wen Qing rolls her eyes with a small smile while Wen Ning chuckles softly at the scene.*

*'If only you would listen to your own advice Wei-gongzi....'*

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Lan Qiren is looking around at his surroundings, trying to figure out if there is an exit or thinner wall with which he and a couple of the stronger cultivators could break through to escape.

Lan Wangji is trying to puzzle out what the sword spirit's last sentence meant. And why it brought about such an immediate and strong reaction from his Airen.

*'What are you hiding, Baobao\* ...? '*

“Chenqing, what you were saying earlier, while...unexpected, *was* the harsh truth.” States Suibian. “Would you mind doing the honours?”

“Gladly.” She snaps her fingers, and the screen lights up once again.

It does not begin with music; instead, the sound of heavy breathing, rushing footsteps, growls and snarls are what fill the room. All attention is quickly diverted to the display.

**A woman is running through a forest, holding on tightly to a bundle in her arms. The sound of wolves can be heard in the background. The woman stops abruptly and places her bundle in a large hole within a tree.**

**“You have to promise Mama that you will stay here until she gets back, alright A-Ying?”**

Wuxian's breath hitches and realization hits the older men at the table. The younger ones are curious and perplexed. Who is this woman? And how does this A-Ying relate to their Wei Laoshi?

**“What’s going on, Mama?” The voice comes from the bundle; it’s a tiny five-year-old with wide silver eyes and chubby cheeks. He looks scared and confused.**

Some viewers coo over how adorable the child looks, others’ eyes widen as they make the connection that the toddler is the Yiling Patriarch.

**“Promise me, baby. Promise your Mama that you’ll stay nice and quiet for Baba and me.”**

**The toddler sniffles and nods his head.**

**The Woman, Cangse Sanren, smiles softly and kisses her son’s forehead.**

**“I love you to Neverland and back.”**

A choked-off noise escapes Wei Wuxian, his eyes are wide, and he is slightly trembling.

Lan Zhan moves his chair closer and pulls his husband into his side.

“Wei Ying, what do you need?”

“Turn it off, Lan Zhan,” his husband whispers pleadingly, voice shaking. “Make them turn it off. *Please* .”

Hanguang-Jun nods and turns his head to his Airen's weapons who are looking at their master with sadness in their eyes. Suibian locks his gaze with Wangji and shakes his head slowly, looking apologetic.

**“A-Ying loves Mama to Neverland and back, too!”**

**The sound of wolves approaches. Sanren looks behind her; her calm facade is broken for a split second, fear and anguish replacing it. But as she turns to look back at her son, no trace of sorrow can be seen.**

**“Baobei,” she whispers, “if there is one thing I want you always to remember, it is this: My A-Ying, you’re born with a smiling face. Always smiling. Never mind too much about any sorrowful things. No matter how worse a situation you’re in, you can always be happy. Does A-Ying understand what Mama is saying?”**

This one scene is much too revealing for Wuxian's liking. But he can do nothing but stare at the beauty of his mother's face. A face he can hardly remember anymore, but that is so clear and full of love.

Lan Zhan sees how these last few words from Cangse Sanren shaped his Wei Ying into becoming the smiley man he's grown to be. However, he worries that the woman's implications are much too profound for a five-year-old to understand. In a way, it seems as if she's asking for too much.

Lan Sizhui is thinking the same thing, while his friends are captivated by what they're seeing.

Wen Ning sneaks a subtle glance towards his master.

*‘Ah. So that is why Wei-gongzi is the way he is....’*

**“Mn! A-Ying understands!”**

**“Good. Mama is, and will always be, so *incredibly* proud of you. Goodbye, sweetheart.”**

**And with that, the woman runs off.**

**Inside the tree, it is dark and slightly uncomfortable, but A-Ying, obediently, does as his mother told him to. He waits. And waits. And waits some more. The sound of crickets and tree frogs dance through the air. He sighs in impatience and tries to move into a more comfortable position when he hears the sound of cracking branches and crunched on leaves.**

***[It must be Mama and Baba! They’ve finally come back for me!]***

Wei Wuxian stills.

“Are those...His thoughts?” Wonders aloud a young woman from the Jiang Sect.

Some people sit up straighter at the prospect of finally being able to know what goes on inside the head of the demon Patriarch. They know that all they are faced with is a child at the moment, but all good things come to those who wait.

(Ok, so I rly like this song, and I would highly suggest either listening to it during or before you read the next parts. It will make the experience so much better because you’ll get a real feel for the ambiance and how the one singing is supposed to sound like (ish). The song is: Human by Christina Perri.)

**Wei Ying is about to call out to his parents when he hears a low feral growl coming closer to his hiding spot. His eyes go wide in fear.**

**Surprisingly, instead of an intense, edge-of-your-seat melody, soft music suddenly drifts into the scene. The voice of Wei Wuxian as an adult accompanies the distressing display.**

**The child clasps his little hands over his mouth in an attempt to silence his loud, erratic breathing.**

**I can hold my breath.**

**“NO! GET AWAY FROM MY BABY!”**

Wuxian bites the inside of his mouth until he tastes blood.

[ *That's Mama!* ]

**The growling moves away from Wei Ying, leading him to realize that it must be headed for his mother instead.**

**“Yes, that’s it! Come get me, you ugly bastard!”**

**The viewers can’t see anything other than Wei Ying inside the darkness of the trunk. He hears the sound of his Mama’s footsteps running away and those of four heavy paws chasing after her, but she doesn’t get far because A-Ying hears her grunt as she hits the ground hard.**

*‘Please. No more...I can’t. Not again.’*

But Wuxian cannot get himself to look away. A part of him thinks that he deserves this. To listen to the worst moment of his life all over again. It seems like the universe cares not for

the fact that the nightmares of that terrible night have only recently been fading away. But thanks to this viewing, he's sure they will be returning with vigour.

**She has no time to plead before her pained screams, and the sound of ripping flesh fills the air.**

Horror sucks the very breath from everyone in the room. Her screams are awful, but seeing the five-year-old basically suffocate himself so that he makes no noise is *heartbreaking*.

**A-Ying's whole body is quivering, and tears stream down his round cheeks as he hyperventilates.**

**I can bite my tongue.**

**The wolf howls long and loud, and then... silence. Time seems to pass by as sunlight shines upon the tear-stained face of A-Ying as he stares at his hands. His eyes are heavy-lidded, glassy and unseeing. He is dazed and motionless; the only proof he's alive is from the slow up-and-down of his chest.**

**The sunlight is replaced by moonlight again, and again, and again. The child unmoving but never asleep.**

**I can stay awake for days if that's what you want.**

**Cangse Sanren's voice echoes inside both the mind of A-Ying and the room full of spectators.**

***"You have to promise Mama that you will stay here until she gets back, alright A-Ying?"***

*“...Mama is, and will always be, so incredibly proud of you.”*

**Be your number one.**

**"Goodbye, sweetheart."**

Rulan allows himself a glance towards his Jiujiu. He looks just as shaken as Jin Ling feels.

*‘That Wei Wuxian...He had told Jiejie and me that his fear of dogs came from living on the streets... Or was that just another one of his lies?’*

Wanyin gazes over to the red and black-robed man. Those at his table do the same.

Wuxian’s eyes are bloodshot, but it seems as if he’s prohibited himself from actually letting any tears fall. His jaw is clenched tightly, and his lips are pursed. He probably feels the heavy gazes of those at his table but is refusing to acknowledge them, keeping his attention towards the screen—the better of two evils and all that.

*‘If he had told me what had actually happened, I wouldn’t have made fun of him for his fear when we were younger. He should create some form of wolf repellent if he hasn’t already...What am I thinking!? Why should I care? He is still the same Wei Wuxian who...who....’*

He sighs to himself.

*‘The same Wei Wuxian he has always been, and that I was unjustly ignorant towards. But it is much too late for reconciliations...He said so himself when he told me to leave the past in the past back at Guanyin Temple.’*

Jiang Cheng returns his attention to the display.



**The scene shifts to Lan Wangji and Wei Wuxian in Mo Xuanyu's body, eating dinner together in the Jingshi.**

Lan Zhan's brows furrow in confusion; he recognizes the meal they are eating. He had it especially prepared for his husband's birthday yesterday.

**The two of them eat silently. Surprisingly it's Lan Wangji that finishes his food first.**

**"How was Wei Ying's birthday?"**

**The scene becomes waterlike and blurry until the middle of the display clears up to show a flashback of glimpses from that very same day.**

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**Wei Wuxian in Caiyi Town.**

*"Even to this day, we have no way of putting down such a dog!? How dare he be allowed to walk amongst us, to breath our same air!... The air of our children!"*

*"Wei Wuxian is a scum that should know his place!"*

*"Did you all know that today is his birthday?"*

*"But of course! It has been considered an ominous day since his death!"*

**Wei Wuxian climbs the step of the Cloud Recesses with a dejected expression.**

**[This is...This is fine.]**

**His face turns determined.**

**[Step 1 of Have A Happy Birthday might've been a flop, but I won't give up. Lan Zhan didn't marry a quitter.]**

**And then it falls once again.**

**[No. Apparently, he married a dog instead...A demon. A monster.]**

Lan Zhan is frozen in shock, sadness and anger; the juniors can't seem to compute with what they've heard their Laoshi refers to himself as; Lan Qiren and other viewers slightly nod their heads in agreement with the words of the Caiyi villagers, not feeling an ounce of sympathy for the Demon Patriarch.

Jiang Cheng looks pissed, and Wen Ning turns to look at Wei-gongzi, hoping that his heavy gaze will make the smaller man turn to him. It doesn't. Wuxian keeps his eyes on the screen, face carefully blank.

**Wei Wuxian in Cloud Recesses.**

***"I know that today is your day of birth, but I ask that you not be selfish for once in your life and leave my youngest nephew alone for the day. He might be your...Husband. But first and foremost, he is a sect leader, a nephew, and a brother. You cannot possibly expect him to cater to you at all times. If anything, you should be the one catering to him."***

Lan Wangji stands up, chair screeching backwards. All turn to look at him; some cultivators place their hands on their swords while everyone at his table jumps in shock.

The great Hanguang-Jun looks down at his uncle, fierce anger revealed in his eyes. His voice is stone cold.

"Shu. Fu.\* "

Lan Qiren looks up at his youngest nephew, surprise no longer present; instead, indifference has replaced it.

"Don't you look at me like that Wangji. That boy ruined your life; you cannot possibly expect me to treat him as if he is one of us."

"I would advise for you to watch what you say, Shufu."

Now angry, the older man stands from his seat as well.

"You dare threaten your uncle? For...For *that* ?!" Qiren questions while pointing at Wei Wuxian, who seems to be trying his hardest to become as small as he can.

Wen Ning desperately wants to stand in front of his master to protect him but knows that would only worsen things.

"He is no cultivator! He has no sect! And he is the son of a servant! He does not fall into any of the categories that surround you, Wangji! He has only ruined you! Ruined our family! And even his own!"

He straightens up, arms in front of him as his hands slide into his oversized sleeves. He calms his voice, giving off an authoritarian persona.

"He has only ever given you pain. Whether it be the one in your heart or the one permanently engraved on your back."

Wuxian visibly flinches.

"All you ever do is worry for him, and it affects the competency of your work. We both know that the only reason he is still alive and well is because you have granted him the right to live in Cloud Recesses. Even *he* realized that after selfishly leaving for six months to travel, before coming back to elope with you! The world outside of Cloud Recesses wants him dead, and they have good reason!"

The Juniors gasp; Wen Ning practically growls; Lan Xichen gapes; Jiang Cheng looks like he wants to punch something.

"You have only ever been something for him to use! A means to an end. He used you in his previous life, and he is bound to do it again; just you wait and see!"

"I would never!" Declares Wuxian, finally speaking up.

He remains seated and looks...small. But his expression is that of pure honesty.

"I understand the grievances you have with me, Lan Xiansheng, and I know that in the past, I have hurt your nephew, but I do love him, with my whole being. Therefore, I would never purposefully hurt him or use him!"

"Do not lie, Wei Wuxian."

"I'm not-"

"You live in my home but are exempt from its rules and punishments because of your relation to Wangji. If it were a normal marriage, the spouse would also have to live the way of a Lan."

"That's not fair! Wei Laoshi was prohibited from becoming a Lan! If you don't allow him to join the sect, then there's no reason for him to follow the rules!" Objects Lan Jingyi.

Lan Qiren glowers at the child and then turns his scowl towards Wuxian.

"Do you see this Wei Wuxian!? You teach the disciples of my clan to speak disrespectfully to their elders! Undoing the hard work of my sect!"

"I-" Wuxian flounders, feeling like a scared and trapped animal.

Lan Qiren ignores him, bringing his attention back to his nephew.

"Wangji. Do you not see what I mean? Do you not see how-"

"Sit. Down."

Lan Qiren's mouth goes slack in shock.

"Did-Did you just order me to-"

"Shufu. I will not ask again."

"Wangji!"

Lan Zhan gives his uncle the darkest glare he has ever seen. Finally, the man sits down in anger.

"You have disrespected both your sect leader, the Chief Cultivator and the Chief Cultivator's husband. In addition, you have broken a handful of sect rules during your *fit*. When this is over, you will undergo punishment and six months in seclusion."

"I am your uncle!"

"7 months."

Qiren looks gobsmacked, and all at the table look at Lan Wangji with a mix of astonishment and awe. All except for Wei Wuxian.

"Lan Zhan. Please. No more."

Wangji turns to his Airen, all anger vanishing the moment he lays eyes on the love of his life.

"Baobao?"

"He has the right to speak his mind. Not everything he said was wrong. Do not..." Wuxian looks down at his lap. "Do not allow me to ruin the happiness of your family. I've ruined the life of one family before, and I refuse to do it again."

Jiang Cheng looks at Wuxian as if the man had physically struck him.

Wuxian doesn't see it, though; his gaze goes to look up at his husband; eyes imploring.

"Please do not put me in that position again, my Cí'ài\*."

Hanguang-Jun says nothing. He sits down and takes his husband in his arms. The smaller man melts into the embrace, hiding his face in the crook of his Baobei's neck.

Chenqing, having had paused the display, snaps her fingers to continue it.

**Wei Wuxian searching for Jingyi and Sizhui in hopes of feeling better so that he doesn't bother his husband.**

*"You are not to disturb the disciples of this here sect," the Lan elder orders harshly. "You are but a disturbance to them. They are good children and do not deserve to be tainted. Especially not by the likes of you."*

"Wei Laoshi, don't listen to him!" Demands Lan Jingyi. "Whenever you need us, you come to find us!"

"Jingyi is right, Baba," adds Lan Sizhui. "We love hanging out with you!"

"And you're not a bad influence, Senior Wei!" Continues Ouyang Zizhen. "You have taught us so many things! If it weren't for you, we probably would've died or been grievously injured during so many different night hunts!"

"It's true, Dajiu!"

The voice of Jin Ling is what gets Wuxian to peek out of his hiding place in Lan Zhan's arms.

Jin Ling smiles softly at his uncle.

"You make me - Uhm, I mean us, all of us - really happy! Instead of being scared or stressed, we enjoy night hunting and learning from you!"

Wuxian gives a bright smile towards the four children.

"Thank you, my precious little gremlins."

"Hey!" They all shout (except for Lan Sizhui, of course) offended but can't help smiling back at the older man.

Hanguang-Jun gives the children a proud head-nod of thanks.

They all blush and look back at the giant screen.

**Face neutral, Wuxian bows, "This one apologizes."**

"You had nothing to apologize for, Airen."

Wuxian looks up at his husband and says nothing, leaning up to kiss him on the cheek and then laying his head back down to rest on his er-gege's shoulder.

***You will do more than simply apologize!" He snaps. "You will go to the Library Pavillion and copy the rules of the Wall of Discipline twice. I would tell you to do two hours of kneeling at the very least, but the sect leader has forbidden such punishments for your pathetic self.***

"..."

***"Do you have nothing to say?"***

"...I"



***"Yes, Zhuren. I will copy the rules twice and burden no one with my presence for the rest of the day."***

Wuxian peeks to see the reactions of those at his table.

Hanguang-Jun looks like he's prepared to cut this Lan elder's arm off. Wen Ning looks pissed, the Juniors scowl at the screen, and Lan Xichen looks solemn with a mix of anger.

Wuxian doesn't know what to do with that last one. He believes that Lan Xichen should be just as angry towards him as his uncle is.

Certain viewers agree strongly with the Lan elder and are happy that such a righteous sect has learned to control such a monster. However, after having seen Hanguang-Jun's reaction towards his uncle, they intelligently remain silent.

**Face red in mortification, Wuxian clenches his fists until they turn white.**

**"Yes. Zhuren. I will copy the rules twice, and....," he falters. Wuxian frowns deeply; his mouth opens and closes several times.**

**[I...I know this already. Must I really say it out loud?]**

***"And?" Stresses the older man in impatience and irritation.***

**Wuxian's face shutters into indifference.**

**"...And burden no one with my presence for the rest of the day," finishes Wuxian emotionlessly.**

***"Get out of my sight."***

The sound of Zidian sparking surprises Wuxian. He looks over to see Jiang Wanyin's face, but the purple-robed cultivator's expression is neutral, showing nothing of what he might be thinking or why he could be angry.

*'Does he wish that I had knelt as well? Maybe I should've...But if I did, then there would've been a higher chance of Lan Zhan or the mini Lan's finding me and hunting down the Lan elder for giving out a punishment that I more or less deserved...'*

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**The flashback ends, the scene returning to the Jingshi.**

**“Wei Ying...?”**

**It seems that Wuxian was silent for too long. He looks up from his plate and grins widely at his husband.**

**I can fake a smile.**

**“I had a perfect day, Baboei! I got to sleep in, eat a delicious breakfast made by my perfect husband, and spent the morning strolling through Caiyi town! Who could ask for anything better?”**

**Lan Wangji smiles and clears the table.**

**“Suibian was right,” comments Jin Ling.**

“About what?” Asks Zizhen.

“Every lie Dajiu tells is accompanied by two truths.”

Hearing that statement, all juniors alongside Sandu Sensgshou and Hanguang-Jun turn to look at Wei Wuxian.

Feeling their stares, he turns away from the screen.

“Uhhh...Why are you all looking at me like that?”

“Wei Ying.”

Lan Zhan sounds heartbroken.

Wuxian hates it.

He cups his husband’s face with his hands and kisses him, wanting to make his sad expression disappear. But, before they pull away completely, Wuxian whispers, “don’t worry about it, Baobei,” against Lan Zhan’s lips.

Wuxian sits back in his chair and turns to the screen, missing Wangji’s anguishedly stunned expression.

*‘Don’t worry about it?... Airen, you cannot truly expect me to turn away from this! We have lived together for almost two full years, and during that whole time, I never once knew how terribly you were being treated! How can you bear it?’*

Wangji turns his face towards the display, his demeanour showing none of his inner strife.

*'I have been blind to your pain, and yet you still love me. Why didn't you tell me Baobao? How can you still stand me?'*

**The scene changes to Wei Wuxian on a night hunt with the juniors.**

“Hey! That’s us!” Proudly observe Jingyi.

“Yea, no shit.”

“Great detective skills, captain obvious.”

Jingyi turns to Jin Ling and then Ouyang Zizhen, looking betrayed, while Lan Sizhui giggles behind his sleeve.

**“Good job, my little ducklings; you all did very well! Time to head back,” he gives each of the children a Proud Wei Laoshi Smile™.**

**“Whoever arrives back at Koi Tower last is a rotten egg!” Declares Jingyi.**

**“Oh, you’re on!” Responds Jin Ling as he and the rest of the juniors step onto their swords.**

**Lan Sizhui turns to their Senior.**

**“You’ve been working very hard on your Golden Core, Baba. Are you still unable to fly?”**

Jiang Cheng stiffens, Wuxian pretends he doesn't notice.

**Another flashback occurs.**

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*"Wei Wuxian, do you know where this is? This place is called the Burial Mounds."*

*His head is pounding.*

*His body aches.*

*He is so very, very cold.*

*He wants to sleep.*

*[I miss Shijie and Jiang Cheng; I hope they're safe and sound...I also miss Lan Zhan. I wonder how he's doing.]*

*"When a living person goes in there, both the body and the soul, they cannot return, unable to get out for all of eternity."*

*[Just shut up and kill me already.]*

The people at his table gasp but Wuxian keeps his eyes locked onto the screen. He can't deal with them right now; he's hoping that the display doesn't show everyone what he thinks it's going to show.

*Wen Chao grabs a fistful of Wuxian's hair, a grotesque grin on his face as he speaks one word at a time, "And you won't be able to get out for all of eternity either!"*

*[... At least I fulfilled Madame Yu and Uncle Jiang's dying wish.]*

Jiang Cheng inhales sharply; no one looks over at him, too stunned by what they're watching.

*As Wen Chao finishes, he throws Wei Wuxian down into the dark abyss.*

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The flashback ends, returning to the group in the forest waiting on their Wei Laoshi's response.

**I can force a laugh.**

Wei Wuxian rubs the back of his neck and chuckles sheepishly.

**"I'm afraid your Baba has been slacking off, little radish. All of you go on ahead; the loser has to help me organize my Qiankun pouch tomorrow morning before we head back to Cloud Recesses!"**

**With that, the juniors fly away.**

Wuxian releases the breath he didn't realize he was holding in.

*'Thank fuck; it didn't show them! They really don't need to see... Small mercies, I guess.'*

The Juniors are frozen in shocked horror.

“He..he was..,” mutters Zizhen.

“They. They th-threw...?” Wen Ning turns to his Wei-gongzi. “They *threw* you from a sword?!”

Wuxian keeps his attention on the screen, not acknowledging anyone’s inquiries and missing the fierce stare of Jiang Wanyin.

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*Jiang Cheng steps back from their hug and gives his brother his sword.*

*“Shijie has been worried sick! Where were you for the past three months? Didn’t we agree to meet at that lousy town down the mountain?”*

*Wei Wuxian lifts the hem of his robe and sits down, “It’s a long story.”*

*Lan Wangji speaks up, “We were told that you were taken to the Burial Mounds.”*

*Wuxian keeps his gaze trained to Jiang Cheng, ignoring Hanguang-Jun.*

*“If I say that I found a mysterious cave somewhere and there was a mysterious book that a mysterious expert had left, and then when I came out, I was this powerful, would you believe me?”*

*Jiang Cheng rolls his eyes in exasperation, but he’s still thrilled to see his brother alive, so he can’t truly be angry.*

*“Wake up. You’ve read too many legends in those picturebooks, haven’t you? How could there be so many experts in the world?”*

*“You see? You don’t believe me even if I say it. I’ll tell you about it if I ever get the chance.”*

*He then turns to Lan Wangji, finally giving him his attention.*

*“No one makes it out of the Burial Mounds alive. If I had truly been taken there, how would I be here with the both of you?”*

*Jiang Cheng studies his brother; he’s staring at Hanguang-Jun as if daring him to contradict his statement.*

*‘It’s true. No one has ever lasted in that place. Plus, the only way to get there is to be pushed down or fall off one of the cliffs. Any entrance from the ground is much too polluted with resentment energy. No one would be able to survive a fall like that. So Wuxian must’ve been somewhere else...’*

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*‘A part of me had known that you were taken there, especially during the 13 years you were dead...But I had never stopped to think about how you were confined into such a place.’*

Wanyin looks back towards the screen.

*‘I have truly failed you as a brother. Jiejie would be so disappointed.’*

**The screen goes black, and two thick white lines divide the display into three equal vertical sections.**



**I can dance and play the part if that's what you ask.**

**The first section lights up.**

***“My A-Ying, you’re born with a smiling face. Always smiling. ~~Never mind too much about any sorrowful things.~~ No matter how worse a situation you’re in, you can always be happy. Does A-Ying understand what Mama is saying?”***

**The section clears to show a 7-year-old Wei Ying sitting in an alley in the cold of winter. His face is littered with bruises, a split lip, and messy hair. He is wearing rags that have holes and slashes in them as if cut through by the claws of an animal. His body trembles due to the frigid weather. He smiles softly through his tears as he plays with three handmade dirty straw dolls.**

**“Mama and Baba love you to Neverland and back!” He makes the two taller dolls say to the smaller one.**

**This scene freezes on the face of the crying yet smiley infant.**

**Some of the viewers gasp at the sight of the cold, beaten child living on the streets. They can’t help but feel sympathy for the poor thing.**

**Hanguang-Jun grabs his husband’s hand and squeezes tightly; his Airen squeezes back but doesn’t turn to look at him.**

**The second section lights up.**

***“ You’re a new disciple at Yunmeng Jiang? Well, here’s a tip! If you ever get in trouble, blame it on our Head Disciple, Wei Wuxian. He’s awesome! He’ll take the blame no problem, and he never holds grudges! ”***

“What?!” Questions a disbelieving and angry Jin Ling.

He turns to his uncle. “Jiujiu did you-”

The next scene silences him before he can finish his question.

**The second section clears up to show a 15-year-old Wei Wuxian slowly pulling his robes over his back. There are old and new whip slash marks all over it. Some of them look red and swollen, with unpleasant-looking welts quickly forming.**

**He breathes in and out harshly but in a forcefully controlled manner. He then exits his room, smiling and waving to those he passes by as if he isn’t in terrible pain.**

**Wei Wuxian is an incredible actor.**

**Like the first section, this one freezes on the smiley, waving face of teenager Wei Wuxian.**

“No,” mumbles a horrified-looking Jiang Cheng. “I didn’t know. Not any of it.”

Wuxian curls up slightly under the guilt and worry of those at his table. He hid this *because* he didn’t want to make any of them worry! Don’t Chenqing and Suibian recognize and understand that?!

He can’t get himself to look at the juniors or Wen Ning, let alone his husband.

**The third and last section lights up.**

***“The Yiling Patriarch? He can destroy armies single-handedly! People fear him because his power seems immeasurable! We cannot possibly allow one single person to hold such an advantage over us all!”***

**The section clears to show the Yiling Patriarch walk towards his tent at one of the Sunshot Campaign War Camps. His steps are determined strides, shoulders back and chin marginally tilted upwards, giving off a sense of self-assured confidence. The tales and displays of his cultivation are proof enough that his cool-headedness and slight arrogance aren’t misplaced.**

**The moment the flaps of his tent close behind him, he crumples to the ground, face scrunched up in agony, breathing erratic. Breathless whimpers escape him as he crawls towards the end of the tent and just barely makes it to his bed before his arms fail under his weight.**

**Give you all I am.**

**“What..? What’s wrong with you, Baba?” Worries Sizhui.**

**“It’s nothing little radish; the display is probably just exaggerating my pain.” Mutters Wuxian.**

**Sizhui turns to see the two weapons are already looking at him. They shake their heads in denial of Baba’s words.**

**A-Yuan turns his attention back to the screen while worrying his lip; a habit he broke years ago but has returned under his immense sadness and concern for his Baba.**

**“Wei Wuxian?” It’s the voice of Jiang Cheng at his tent entrance. “Are you awake? We’re needed at the next meeting. I will *not* have you embarrass the sect again by showing up late. Understood?”**

**Wuxian tries to control his breathing; eyes screwed shut.**

**“Wei Wuxian? Don’t make me come in there.”**

**“Aiyah Jiang Cheng! I’ll be there in a moment! Go ahead without me.” Wuxian replies, voice relaying none of his sufferings. He sounds completely fine, not even the slightest quiver in his tone to supply otherwise.**

**“You better be.” Audibly scowls Wanyin before the sound of his footsteps recedes.**

**I can do it.**

**Wuxian undergoes a few more breathing exercises and then sits up with visible difficulty.**

**“...Why?” Asks Lan Xichen. “You...If you were injured, you could’ve gone to the healing tents. Any doctor would’ve looked you over. Demonic cultivation or not, you were an important contributor to the war, Wei Wuxian.”**

**Wuxian sighs and turns to Lan Xichen, ignoring everyone else at the table.**

**“While it’s true that I was a vital weapon for the Sunshot Campaign—”**

**Sandu Senghsou, Hanguang-Jun, and Zewu-Jun flinch at the truth of that statement.**

**“— I had many enemies among those who were supposed to be my comrade in arms during the war. Meaning that if I had been seen heading towards the infirmary, they would most likely strike while they thought I was weak and injured.”**

“That’s just you assuming that you were worth the trouble! It’s doubtful that anyone would attack you, especially not during a war. *You* are the discourteous and uncivil one, don’t project your actions upon those of righteous cultivators!” Declares someone in the crowd of viewers.

Hanguang-Jun and surprisingly Jiang Wanyin gaze towards the crowd with frosty scowls, looking for whoever spoke those words.

Wuxian chuckles mirthlessly.

“Yea. Sure.”

“Baba... *Did* fellow soldiers attack you during the Sunshot Campaign?”

Everyone at his table except for Lan Qiren looks at him, waiting for his response.

Wuxian blinks.

“No...?”

“That wasn’t convincing at all,” mutters Jin Ling.

The three older cultivators look lost in thought, all with matching expressions of seriousness. Lan Wangji and Jiang Cheng seem angry, while Lan Xichen seems disappointed.

Some viewers are thinking over what they’re seeing and the opinions they have of the Yiling Patriarch. If his colleagues were attacking him during the war, then he had no choice but to put up a mask of strength...And it seems like his life isn’t as great as they thought.

...They have some things to think over.

**I can do it.**

**Wuxian does as promised. He walks out of his tent the same way he strode in. Head held high; his expression shows none of his physical agonies.**

**The third section freezes at the “normal” looking Wei Wuxian.**

**Seeing the three scenes side by side, 7-year-old, 15-year-old, and 18-year-old Wei Wuxian, the similarities and differences are highly apparent.**

**I can do it~.**

**The screen goes dark, and then a single spotlight shines down upon Wei Wuxian in his original body as he stands in the middle of the darkness. Head down, bangs covering his eyes.**

**The sound of voices talking one after each other and some over others fills the room.**

**"My A-Ying."**

**"Just the son of a servant!"**

**"A-Xian, there you are!"**

**"Useless piece of shit! You don't even have the right to *look* at me, street rat!"**

**"Poor child, that Wei Wuxian. A boy with a bright smile but no real home."**

**"Wei Ying, this is your new brother and sister."**

**"Dajiu!"**

**"This is your fault! I told you that you will only ever bring trouble to us all!"**

**"Xian-Gege!"**

**"A-Xian, protect A-Cheng and Jiang Yanli."**

**"Monster!"**

**"Is XianXian three years old?"**

**"You are not to refer to my children as Jijie and Didi\*! You are below them! You are a servant, and you should do well to remember that!"**

**"I know that my wife can be a bit harsh on you at times, A-Xian, but bear with it, alright? Now go and play with Jiang Cheng. I'm pretty sure I saw him by the docks with the other disciples."**

Jiang Cheng's eyes widened in shock. He hadn't known that his mother had said those words to Wei Wuxian. And his father...

*'Father...he. He knew about Wuxian's whip marks and didn't...Care?! I... I'm an idiotic fool.'*

**"Demon!"**

**"Senior Wei!"**

**"*Wei Wuxian!* You protect my children with your life, do you understand me?!"**

**"So it's you. You've come back. *Wei Wuxian!* "**

The juniors and Jiang Cheng wince.

**"Wei Ying...I love you."**

**"Curse you, Yiling Patriarch!"**

**"That Stygian Seal of yours, it would be unfair if the Yunmeng Clan were the only ones to possess it."**

Many cultivators and commoners frown at the voice of Jin Guangshan. He was a disgusting man whose death might not have been celebrated like that of the Yiling Patriarchs, but it wasn't mourned upon either.

**"Love you to Neverland and back."**

**"Wei Wuxian is the notorious terror of the cultivation world!"**

**"Baba!"**



**"How dare you upstage, my son! You are no one! You are *nothing*! It is because of *my* generosity that you live here!"**

Hanguang-Jun would love to bring Madame Yu back to life so that he can have some *particular* words with her. The juniors are thinking the same thing. Jiang Cheng looks over at a wincing Wei Wuxian with pained eyes.

*'I swear to you, Wuxian...I didn't know. If only you had told me. Why didn't you tell me? Did you never once consider me a brother?'*

**"Wei-Gongzi?"**

**"Do not be selfish for *once* in your life."**

**"Wei Wuxian, I told you to buy radishes, not potatoes! They're too expensive."**

**"Get out of my sight."**

**"My A-Ying, you're born with a smiling face. Always smiling...Does A-Ying understand what Mama is saying?"**

**"{Hello, little one.}"**

Everyone shivers in fright.

**"Goodbye, Wei Wuxian. Thank you, and I'm sorry."**

*'Oh Jie...We shouldn't have left Wei-gongzi the way we did....'*

**"A-Ying."**

**"A-Xian."**

**"Wei Ying."**

**"Wei Wuxian."**

**"The Yiling Patriarch."**

**The voices cease, and Wuxian lifts his head, his expression is one of determination, but it cracks when his nostrils flare slightly; his eyebrows twitch while furrowed in an attempt at keeping all of his emotions locked in.**

Wei Wuxian has always been a man of feelings, his emotions reflected in everything he does and has ever done. The saying that "the eyes are the window to the soul" could be said to have been made for him.

**Although his body is still, his eyes are a sea of words and feelings that are overflowing. He needs and wants to share them but can't. So, instead, he sings.**

**The music quiets as Wuxian's voice becomes louder. It echoes throughout the cave, amplifying the emotions entwined within his words.**

**But I'm only human. And I bleed when I fall down.**

He's looking straight ahead, but to the viewers, it's as if he's staring right at them, directly into their souls.

The lyrics and the beauty of the voice give everyone in the room goosebumps, no one physically able to look away.

His countenance, no longer able to remain stiff, falls apart. His words are soft and sad, but his face is angry and hurt.

I'm only human, and I crash and I break down.

He brings his hands to his head, slightly pulling his hair.

Your words in my head.

He takes his right hand and clutches at his chest while the tears cascade freely down his cheeks.

Knives in my heart.

He has no visible injuries, yet his expression reflects how he is in *so much* emotional pain it might as well be physical. His knees bend, and he slumps forward. It's as if the heaviness of his words weighs him down. The more he sings, the more he breaks.

You build me up and then I fall apart.  
Cause I'm only human~.

The music returns to a louder volume, having lowered to let Wuxian's voice shine through. His voice returns to being calm as he sings what he considers facts.

**I can turn them off. Be a good machine.**

A see-through holographic Madame Yu appears at Wuxian's left. She looks down at him authoritatively with a deep scowl. He lowers his head in submission and then looks back up at her. All previous sadness is gone, just like that. Having replaced it instead with the face of a soldier ready to receive an order or a punishment.

"He...Did you hear what he said?" Questions a distressed Ouyang Zizhen.

"Gotta be more specific," replies a distracted Jingyi.

"He said he 'can turn them off'. Do you know what he was referring to?"

"His emotions," whispers Sizhui, voice breathless as though if he spoke any louder, the tears he's holding back would fall.

*'Baba, you can't...You shouldn't have to switch off your emotions for others. You...you shouldn't be so good at it either.'*

Madam Yu disappears, and Wuxian turns his head to the right, another hologram materializing. This one is Sandu Sengshou looking at Wuxian emotionlessly. Wuxian bows to him deeply.

**I can hold the weight of worlds if that's what you need.**

**Wuxian looks up and offers Jiang Wanyin a soft smile.**

**Be your anything.**

*‘The only thing I ever wanted you to be, was by my side like you had promised...As my right-hand man. As my brother. I never needed anything else, Wuxian.’*

**Jiang Wanyin dissolves, and Wuxian stands up straight. He begins walking in place.**

**I can do it.**

**A light shines on his face from up ahead, the source of it hidden from the viewers. Wuxian’s voice gets louder once again, passion dripping off each word. His face, once again, set in determination.**

**I can do it.**

**He starts jogging towards the light. It seems as if he’s running in place, but the sunlight that shadows over more of his face, the more he runs, is proof that he’s approaching his destination. It accentuates his tan skin and freckles.**

**He runs faster, arms pumping beside his body. He then sprints, leaning forward as much as he can, arm outstretched as if to touch the light, all without falling over.**

**I'll get through it!**

He runs through the light and comes out on the other side. He slowly spins in place to look around himself. He's made it out of a cave and is now standing near the edge of a cliff. The view of the sunset is breathtaking; it colours the trees and mountains that span out towards the horizon.

**But I'm only human!**

Wuxian sings his lungs out, allowing all his hurt to flow through the lyrics as he shares it with the countryside. The way he gestures to himself makes it seem as if he's arguing with someone, but there's no one there but himself and nature.

**And I bleed when I fall down!**

He stretches out his arms, lifts his face to the sky and belts out the song as if daring the universe to contradict him. Tears begin anew, racing down his cheeks as he balls his fists and slightly shakes his arms to emphasize his sentiments.

**I'm only human!**

He lowers his arm, opens his eyes and looks at the sky pleadingly. He gesticulates to himself vehemently. Expression a mix between declaring and begging the words he's singing to be true. For them to be *his* truth.

**And I crash and I break down! Your  
words in my head, knives in my heart.  
You build me up and then I fall  
apart! 'Cause I'm only human!**

He takes a moment to gasp for air as the music intensifies.

He then falls to his knees.

**I'm only human.**

He screws his eyes shut, holding tightly to the front of his robes with both hands. He tugs on the fabric with every word.

**I'm only human!**

Wuxian goes on a vocal run with the last word. It echoes and fades away into the skyline. His body slowly crouches lower and lower as the note continues. By the time it ends, his knees are entirely under him, his stomach touching his thighs, his temple resting upon his knees with his hands clutching his hair.

**Just a little human~!**

The music quiets as his voice echoes away into the distance.

The scene shifts, and it's Wuxian (in Mo Xuanyu's body) in the same position, except on his side, in his bed in the Jingshi. Although he's under his covers, the viewers can see his crestfallen yet resigned expression.

*[This is fine... I've never really liked my birthday anyway.]*

The singing voice of Wei Wuxian is soft and accepting.

**I can take so much. 'Til I've had enough.**

**He closes his eyes, and the screen goes black. When he opens his eyes, it's the Yiling Patriarch's body that stands in a black room once again. But this time, there are hundreds of floating images and videos surrounding him, and they all contain moments in his life when he was struggling or in pain and had no one but himself to turn to, from when he was the age of five to now as Mo Xunayu.**

**The music returns with the intensity of his voice.**

**He stands in the middle of them all and yells/sings to all the floating images.**

**'Cause I'm only human! And I bleed when I fall down! I'm only human~! And I crash and I break down! Your words in my head, knives in my heart! You build me up and then I fall apart! 'Cause I'm only human~!**

**He ends the song on his knees, staring down at his hands with silent tears streaming down his face.**

**He looks up, seemingly at the viewers, and they can see the pure shattered heartbreak in his eyes.**

**The music stops.**

**The display goes dark.**



## Chapter End Notes

Qingren = lover/sweetheart

Baba = papa/dad

Fuqin = father

Baobao = darling

Shufu = father's younger brother/uncle

Ci'ai = love

Didi = younger brother

~~~~~

\*low whistle\* That was a whole lot. Personally, I even needed to reread it a few times to really absorb everything.

The fonts rly didn't want to cooperate. I fixed them, so if you read this right after I posted I would suggest rereading it now.

So I wrote a playlist of songs I'm going to use (I will be adding some from the suggestions I got), and each song is accompanied by a description of who it relates to and how. This is the description I had for Human by Christina Perri: "YOU ALREADY KNOW THIS IS WEI WUXIAN OMFG!!!!" :D

Drop comments, theories, or suggestions down below! I love reading them!

If you see that I made a mistake in relation to the Chinese terms I use, please let me know!

I hope you have a great day/night! 

# Division Amongst The Cultivators

## Chapter Notes

Earlier today I got a comment asking when I was going to post the next chapter. I responded sometime this week or next week, saying that I honestly didn't have a clue. But, I need to learn to stop telling you guys when I plan on posting since I never end up going through with it. 😞

Also! Also! THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR ALL THE SONG RECOMMENDATIONS!!! I got so many that I don't need any more of them! AND THANKS FOR ALL THE KUDOS UISGDIUGKDASKUD!!!!!! AND YOUR COMMENTS MAKE MY DAY! 💖

Some extra news: I got Fan Art!!! It's from my new editor!! She drew Chenqing and it looks awesome!! You can find her Tik Tok @lunar\_rose\_yt

Anywhooo, enjoy the chapter!! And go give some love to my editor's Tik Tok!

~~~~~

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

Okay, so this has gone from bad to worse, and Wuxian knows that the moment the display ends, he will be facing a boatload of questions, most he knows he won't want to answer and others he will *refuse* to answer. In other words, he needs a plan, and he needs it right now.

Wuxian looks around at the viewers, who are entranced by his sob story of a life, and it makes his insides churn in discomfort. He wouldn't give most of these people the privilege of hearing his thoughts, others he hadn't wanted to burden.

*'I am going to make that screen self-destruct if it's the last thing I do.'*

Wei Wuxian's gaze lands on the exit of the room, and an idea presents itself. And just in time, too, because the music ends, and he is quickly bombarded.

His husband pulls him into a crushing embrace, and he hears the screeching of four chairs being pushed back abruptly as the juniors shamelessly join the hug. The impromptu group

hug is... Nice. Of course, it is. But it would be much better if it was under more favourable circumstances.

"Senior Wei! You-you-you!" Wails Ouyang Zizhen, always the sensitive little munchkin.

"Why didn't you ever say anything, you idiot?!"

His nephew is so very kind. His respect for his elders is much to be desired, as usual. But Wuxian is unable to do anything other than love him unconditionally anyway.

His favourite mini Lan's don't say anything, but Wuxian can hear their sniffles. It makes his heartbreak and his anger rise. However, as he had previously learnt, his anger isn't going to make Suibian or Chenqing budge, which means that he will have to implement a different tactic.

He feels the juniors move away, but his Baobei doesn't seem like he's going to be doing that anytime soon. He relishes how safe and happy he feels in his husband's arms and listens in on what the rest of the room has to say about what they've just watched.

"That poor child...He could never seem to catch a break."

"The death of his parents seemed so brutal, and we didn't even visually *see* anything!"

"How long was he on the streets for? If his parents died when he was five, and he was seven when playing with those straw dolls... When did the Jiang's take him in?"

"Is no one going to talk about his whip marks?" Questions an older disciple from the Hedong Fu Sect. "Zidian is a high-ranking spiritual weapon! One lash from it can render most cultivators handicapped!"

"Wei Wuxian was only 15 and walked those lashes off like they were nothing!"

"No! No! Stop! Don't you see what's happening here?"

"Yes! We have witnessed the mistreatment of a child living under the roof of a toxic household!"

Wuxian bristles at the comment.

*'How dare they speak ill of the dead! There was nothing "toxic" about my home! Yes, perhaps Madame Yu's punishments were... strict. But that doesn't give them the right to speak badly of her! She and Uncle Jiang gave me clothes, food, a warm place to stay, and the opportunity to grow a golden core and become a cultivator! Without them, I would've most likely died on the streets.'*

"Exactly!"

"She's right! How was this allowed?"

"No! Don't let the Yiling Patriarch and his minions fool you! He is searching for sympathy! He wants us to feel bad for him so that we neglect the horrid wrongdoings that he later accomplished as an adult!"

"Are you then going to ignore the injustice he faced as a child?"

"I do not deny that as an infant, he was...unlucky. But that was in the past; he was still innocent. We mustn't forget that he is no longer that innocent child! He is a demon!"

"...You know what? He's right! I feel bad for the kid we saw on the screen, but he's long gone."

Other members of the crowd nod in agreement.

"Are you all truly so heartless? Did you not see how much of himself he gave to the Sunshot initiative?! At the time, he was already the Yiling Patriarch! But he fought until he could no longer stand!"

"That's right!"

"Yes! Take that into consideration!"

Where the viewers were once united, they are now divided. Some are only able to see the evil Yiling Patriarch that they had personally witnessed all those years ago or grew up learning about. Others keep an open mind, allowing themselves to absorb the exclusive information they have been given, and analyze it to create new points of view and opinions.

"I mean, I'm happy that some of these nincompoops are finally seeing the light and all," states a puffy-eyed Lan Jingyi.

"Jingyi..." chastises a slightly amused Lan Sizhui.

"Buuut," continues the un-Lan-like Lan, "are we not going to talk about Wei Laoshi's 'let's *not* share our feelings' issue he has going on?"

Wuxian reaches his arm out of Lan Zhan's grasp and smacks Jingyi upside the head.

"Ow! What was that for? Someone had to say it!"

Wuxian doesn't deign the boy with a response; instead, he snuggles back into Lan Wangji's firm hold. Although he isn't showing it, Wuxian is concerned about Lan Zhan. He hasn't moved an inch, and he isn't saying anything either.

"Also, someone said that Senior Wei is no longer an innocent child," Remarks Zizhen.  
"While it's true that he is no longer an infant, he *is* innocent! Have none of you been paying attention?"

Jin Ling and Jingyi nod their heads in support of their friend's statement.

Lan Xichen seems to take notice of his brother's temperament and calls out to him in worry.

"Wangji, are you alright?"

Wuxian can feel the attention of everyone at his table stray upon him and his husband. Lan Wangji doesn't respond; he's still as a statue. Wuxian knows that the moment he speaks to Lan Zhan, he will have to face him and his questions, but his worry for his Baobei outweighs his anxieties.

Taking a deep breath, Wuxian buries his face in his husband's robes and rubs the taller man's back.

"...Zhang Fu?"

Wangji takes a shuddering breath and pulls back enough for Wei Wuxian to see his lover's face.

The moment they lock eyes, the smaller man tries to extract himself from his husband, but the other isn't allowing him to do so.

"Uhh, you okay, Senior Wei?" Asks Jingyi.

"No," responds Wuxian. He is expressionless, and his voice is eerily calm. "I am going to **obliterate** my weapons for making my Lan Zhan cry."

*'Hanguang-Jun is crying?!'* Think the juniors in astonishment.

Somehow Wuxian's lack of audible anger makes him a tad bit terrifying.

"Wei Wuxian... Perhaps you should remain calm?" Suggests Lan Xichen.

"I am calm."

Which is true, but that is precisely what makes this situation troubling. Zewu-Jun should've worded his request better.

So he tries again.

"Perhaps it is not the best idea to...harm your spiritual and resentful weapons, Master Wei."

"Or, perhaps it is the *best* decision since it would get us out of here and bring an end to this stupid viewing."

Some people in the room perk up at the idea of escape, which is something Wuxian will be using to his advantage in a moment.

While Wuxian might be verging on furious with his sword and flute spirits, he knows deep down that *he* is the one that hurt Lan Zhan. He made decisions, went through shit, and never once told any of it to his husband.

He continues to squirm in Lan Zhan's hold and initiates his previously thought-about plan. He makes sure his voice is loud enough to reverberate throughout the room.

"You know, back in my day, only the strongest of cultivators were able to fight against Chenqing's enchantment. It's disappointing to see that there are no such cultivators anymore...."

'3.'

'2.'

Wuxian lowers his head and smirks discreetly.

'1.'

"Excuse me—!?"

"What enchantment..??"

"I'll have you know—!"

"I am the strongest of—!"

"Such disrespect! He knows nothing! We could—!"

People speak over each other, defending their honour and cursing the Yiling Patriarch for such a callous declaration.



Wuxian rolls his eyes.

"Your feathers get ruffled much too quickly. Besides, if what you all say is true, then how come none of you have tried to escape?"

That silences the crowd.

*'This is too easy.'*

"I mean, think about it. Chenqing told you to enter this room, and you did. She tells you to shut up; you do it. She hasn't given you any time to even *think* about escaping because she distracts you with an indecently huge screen spouting absurdities!"

*'I was a little too transparent at the end there, but knowing some of the buffoons here, they'll eat up what I'm serving.'*

Some contemplate the words of the young man, while others believe him right away. The sound of chairs being pushed back and swords scraping out of their sheaths echo throughout the room.

"I shall not allow some trivial spell to keep me contained here!"

"We are cultivators of the righteous path! We will not let the musical instrument of a demon dictate what we will and will not do!"

"I am Ezhou Zing, sect leader of the Ezhou Clan! I, alongside my faithful disciples, will not have the Yiling Patriarch state what we can and cannot accomplish! Our will is much stronger than any resentfully tainted enchantment!"

*'That one's quite pompous...He would fit right in with the Jin Sect.'*

"I am sect leader of the Pingzhou Clan, and I concur with sect leader Ezhou Zing!"

"So does my sect!"

"Yes! Us too!"

"Us as well!"

The announcements of the smaller sects ignite a wave of revolt. Commoners join in on the protests, and before Wuxian knows it, he has gotten over 200 people to stand up against his weapons for something they never actually did.

*'Huh...So that's how Jin Guangyao took me down so easily. These people will believe anything.'*

The juniors are overwhelmed by how everything escalated so quickly. Zewu-Jun feels bone-deep exasperation. Lan Qiren is contemplating getting his sect to join the masses, and Jiang Wanyin has a strong urge to whip all these idiots with Zidian.

A large number of people raise their swords towards the oddly quiet and unbothered weapon spirits.

"We are leaving, and there is nothing you can or will do to stop us!"

"Exactly! No funny business!"

Those with their swords raised are placed at the frontline of the large crowd as the rest slowly leave the room through the large exit they entered from before the first viewing. The disciples of the more prominent clans feel conflicted. Some want to leave as well, while others are as

confused as the juniors. Either way, they turn their gazes from the departing party to their sect leaders and back, waiting for their orders.

*'That was wayyy too easy, which I mean, is great for me, but concerning in regards to the quality of the cultivation world's competency...Oh, well!'*

Wuxian had created the mob intending to get everyone to think about something other than what was displayed on the screen. It was a success! However, because all of his attention was riveted upon the horde of easily-manipulated cultivators, Wuxian had forgotten to pay attention to a vital component that has always been able to see through all his bullshit.

Lan Zhan.

He is quickly reminded of his mostly-all-seeing-usually-all-knowing husband when the arms around him tighten. He freezes, his subtle smug look of victory disappears, and he lowers his head, eyes trained downwards.

If he looks at his Baobei, he knows he won't be able to stall any longer. And knowing his Zhiji\* as well as he does, Wuxian is positive that the other man definitely wasn't distracted or misled by his antics.

Most likely, nothing would be able to get Lan Zhan to forget about all the shit he just learned Wuxian went and still goes through.

*'Well... It was worth a try.'*

The sounds of the room fade away as Wuxian concentrates on his husband's heartbeat and waits anxiously for Lan Zhan to...

"Wei Ying, look at me, please."

There it is.

The killing blow.

Wuxian has no choice but to do as his sweet and mournful husband has kindly and calmly asked of him. He might regret it. Gods, he's *definitely* going to regret it. But if Lan Zhan needs something, Wuxian will do absolutely everything in his power to give it to him. This is how Wuxian works. It's how he's wired, and it's this mindset that has followed him in all the lives he has blessedly been given.

Oh, so slowly, silver and gold meet, and no one else exists beyond the two of them.

"Your parents..."

"That was a long time ago, Lan Zhan."

"How long did you live on the streets for?"

"...From the age of five to ten."

"Did no one know about how you were treated in the Jiang sect?"

Wuxian sighs heavily.

"Lan Zhan, they're only showing the sucky parts. My life at Yunmeng Jiang was one of laughter, safety and adventures!"

"One lie with each truth."

"That was nonsense! I—"

"Safety, Wei Ying? Did you truly feel safe as a whipping boy for the Yunmeng disciples?"

"I was not—!"

"Was your laughter ever true?"

"Of course it was!"

"Really?"

"Yes. Lan Zhan. It was."

Wuxian feels as if he's being attacked. He wasn't expecting his husband to question him like this. Frustration and slight anger colour his words.

"Despite what you've seen, I did have a good childhood. I had siblings; shidi's, shimeis; plus a warm place to sleep at night. I didn't ever have to stress and worry about how, when, or where I would get my next meal."

"Those are basic necessities all should have access to."

"That may be so, but above all, I was given a chance to become something other than a street rat. The chance to follow in my parent's footsteps!"

*'Which, in the end, I technically did, didn't I. Left the Yunmeng Jiang Sect and died at a young age. How poetic.'*

"Wei Ying, you felt the need to hide your hurt."

"So?!"

Lan Zhan looks at him sadly, and Wuxian wants the floor to swallow him up.

"Home is a place where one is sheltered from the judgement of others, where one can be their full self without restraint. Where one can share their hurt with those they care for without the fear of being unfairly punished for it."

"What's your point, Lan Zhan?" Sighs Wuxian.

"Your pain was hidden from the Jiang's, and I can understand why you would do that. But..."

Wangji falters, taking a moment to gather his thoughts.

"But, Wei Ying..." His intense gaze bores into Wuxian's, sadness swimming within his eyes. "Why did you hide your pain from *me*?"

Wuxian's shoulders slump in defeat, all anger vanishes.

"Lan Zhan..."

His mouth opens and closes a few times, lips not knowing how to shape themselves into words he needs to say.

"You know I love you, right?"

"Mn."

"Well, then let's just say that I... Held back some stuff from you *because* I love you."

"Wei Ying, you are my Airen. We are to share everything with one another. Our happiness and joy, alongside our pain and sorrows."

"Either way, all that was in the past Lan Zhan," responds Wuxian, not-so-subtly changing the subject. "I didn't think that it would be important to mention because it doesn't affect me anymore."

"Doesn't it?" Asks Suibian, bringing himself into the couple's conversation. "While you may deny it, your past is what has shaped you into who you are. While for most people it tends to liberate, for you it has only constrained."

"What's that supposed to mean?" Questions a confused Jin Ling.

"It means that your Dajiu's past has been a tool used by others to imprison him."

"It is constantly used by these fools who consider themselves cultivators. They throw his past in his face at every chance they get," adds Chenqing.

"And it was utilized by Yu Furen when our Master was young," continues Suibian. "She was manipulative to the point where the name of our Master's parents were turned into chains binding him, instead of step stools leading him to greater heights."

"But our Master flourished despite that," proudly states the flute spirit. "However, it doesn't mean that Zi Zhihu\* didn't succeed in hindering our Master in other ways."

"That is enough!" angrily declares Wuxian. "The Jiang's gave me opportunities and privileges that so many can only dream of having! I am nothing but indebted to them for their graciousness and kindness! I do not-"

**"Indebted!?"** Roars Chenqing.

A suffocatingly heavy wave of resentment pushes from one end of the room to the other. Other than this being a form of releasing her astounded anger, Chenqing's power surge had another side-effect: Silence.

Where everyone was protesting and complaining, there is now stillness. This quiet is different than when she usually tells everyone to shut up, and the reason for that is because she decided to do what her Master wrongly accused her of doing in the first place.

Placing a spell on the crowd.

Everyone except for those at Wei Wuxian's table have been basically turned to stone. Resentful energy clings to their immobile forms like a bodysuit, making it seem like time has stopped. Some are suspended with their arms in the air, others in the middle of taking a step out of the room. There are faces literally frozen in fear, others in anger, and some in startlement.

The juniors are stunned; they've never seen something like this before. The four older cultivators, alongside Wen Ning, have only ever seen Wei Wuxian do something similar, but only towards corpses under his control.

"Holy shit," whispers Jingyi in awe and slight fear.

"It seems everyone at our table is unaffected," comments Sizhui with wide eyes.



"Well...Almost everyone." Zizhen points his thumb towards Lan Qiren, who is also compromised by the resentful energy.

Suibian clears his throat awkwardly.

"Well then..."

He looks nervously between his Master and Chenqing as they glower at each other.

When he felt the impending increase of his flute's energy, Wuxian reacted quickly. He disentangled himself from Lan Zhan's hold, more or less roughly, and placed himself in front of his husband, prepared to protect those sitting at his table.

Although she had spared him and his seatmates, Wuxian still didn't appreciate Chenqing's behaviour.

"*Control* yourself," he demands between clenched teeth.

"I will do as you say when you learn that you don't owe the Jiang's shit!"

Wuxian's hand subconsciously reaches towards his waist but then freezes in place as his brain catches up to the fact that the weapon he would usually use to defend himself is standing in front of him in human form.

"You did everything they ever asked of you without complaint! You took beating, after beating, after beating and never once fought back because they told you you deserved it when you didn't! You gave up a physical. Fucking. Part. Of yourself—"

Sandu Shengshou flinches violently.

"—because they asked you to protect their children with your life! *Their* children! They never considered *you* their child, and that hurt you in more ways than one! While Ziyuan made sure you knew it every goddamn day, Fengmian would give you that stupid smile and say nothing. He *never* refuted her words. He *never* stopped her from whipping you, and you and I both know that all he ever saw when he looked at you were your parents! If anything, the Jiang's should be indebted to *you* !"

"You have no right to speak on things you are clueless about!" Shouts Wuxian, deciding to make this an official screaming match. "You are made up of demonic energy! Your existence is directly related to this hellish place where death is infused within the walls! Your words are groundless, for all you are capable of is deplorability! How would you know anything about family?! About kindness?"

"Master... That's not fair," vocalizes Suibian softly.

"This isn't about what is or isn't fair." Responds Wuxian in a calmer voice. While he isn't much happier with Suibian, he won't yell at someone who doesn't deserve it. "Why should I, or anyone else in this room, listen to what a tool of evil has to say? She is not a viable source of information."

"Stop trying to act like them."

"Like who?"

"The cultivation world." Seeing confused faces, Suibian continues. "Master, first you accuse us of doing something we didn't do, and now you say that because Chenqing uses resentful energy, her words are unreliable and false? This situation sounds uncomfortably familiar, does it not?"

The irony of Wei Wuxian's actions is not lost upon the older men at the table.

"So what if it does? It ended up working out well for the cultivation world, didn't it?" Snaps the demonic cultivator in irritation.

The sound of gasps and sharp intakes of breath abruptly remind Wuxian of those behind him.

*'Aw, Shit.'*

Wuxian drags a hand down his face and tries not to groan. He takes a deep breath and turns away from his weapons to face the small group.

"That..came out wrong. I- I didn't mean-"

"You did," interrupts Lan Zhan.

Wuxian doesn't know what to say to that.

"Wei Ying, Chenqing is not wrong. They treated you terribly-"

"Shijie and Jiang Cheng did no such thing!" Protests Wuxian without thinking.

Lan Zhan's eyes soften, although he only agrees with the first half of his husband's statement.

"Boabao, other than your siblings, Yunmeng Jiang treated you like a servant."

Wuxian is getting tired of this conversation.

"Lan Zhan," he sighs, "I *am* a servant. It was well within their rights to-"

"Excuse you?!" Rages Jin Ling

"Baba! No!"

"You better not finish that sentence!"

"Senior Wei, how could you think such a thing?!"

Wuxian is caught by surprise at the junior's vehement reactions. He shakes his head with a soft smile and walks towards the closest ducklings, Sizhui and Zizhen. He ruffles their hair affectionately while gazing at each of the four boys.

"You alright, kiddies?" He questions inquisitively.

"No, Wei Laoshi, we are not *okay* . Don't talk about yourself like that!" Orders Jingyi

Wuxian's brows furrow in honest confusion. "Like what?"

"Baba..." Sizhui sounds heartbroken, and Wuxian wants to, needs to, fix it.

"Senior Wei, you are no servant!" Declares Zizhen

"Mn!" Agrees Jin Ling.

Wuxian blinks, and then his face contorts into mild amusement.

"You silly geese, I wasn't insulting myself as you seem to think I was doing."

"Then what *were* you doing?" Asks Jin Rulan.

Wuxian shrugs his shoulders and replies in an unbothered manner.

"I was simply stating a fact."

The juniors stare at him for a moment, waiting for the other shoe to drop; for their senior to start laughing at them, commenting on their gullibility in between giggles. But it doesn't happen. Wei Laoshi genuinely believes that what he said is true.

Hanguang-Jun feels like a failure. He has, somehow, during their two-year marriage, wronged his Airen. The other thinks so little of himself, and Wangji can't help but think that perhaps if he showered Wuxian with more love and attention, the other would know how much he is cared for. Maybe he would've even trusted Wangji enough to confide in him. But he didn't, which means that Wangji has failed his Wei Ying, something he had sworn 16 years ago he would never do again.

Wen Ning feels similarly. Although he's always been shy and introverted, Wei Gongzi considers him a brother. Before the fall of the Dafan Wens, he would go to Wei-Ge when he needed someone to talk to, and he'd always hoped or assumed that the older man knew that he could do the same. Wen Ning shouldn't have been so naive. If Master Wei didn't come to him with his troubles before his death, why would he think that Wei-Ge would do so when he came back?

*'There were times in the Burial Mounds where Gongzi would say something harsh and self-deprecating and then widen his eyes in realization of his slip-up. Jiejie and I would try and say something, but he would always wave us off or turn it into a joke... He still turns to jokes as a coping mechanism, that'll most likely never change... But it seems that passive-aggressiveness has become another outlet. But only when Wei-Ge is highly irritated, it seems.'*

Lan Xichen gazes at Wuxian and wonders where that boisterous, confident, pony-tailed young teen went.

*'I know he had to grow up and that I was one of the individuals that led to his death... But he forgave so quickly and easily, always smiling and laughing, even in the walls of Cloud Recesses. I was naive and foolish to believe that all was well. It was an unrealistic assumption.'*

If Xichen were to put himself in Wei Wuxian's shoes, he doesn't know how he would be able to smile and laugh so freely after being forcibly returned from the dead back to a world where everyone denounces you at every turn.

"For fucks sake, you are not a servant, Wei Wuxian!" Abruptly shouts Jiang Wanyin in anger. "When will you get it through that thick skull of yours?"

His loud statement startles everyone at the table, but Wei Ying is the most shocked of all.

Deciding to use the sudden silence to his advantage, Jiang Cheng turns his gaze towards the two weapon spirits. His stare is intimidating and unfaltering.

"What you showed us, is it all true?"

Suibian stares back unflinchingly and lifts three fingers in the air.

"Yes. You have my word."

Wanyin holds the gaze for a few seconds longer before responding with a slight head nod. He then turns towards the giant screen.

"Earlier, you said something to Wuxian...Stating that if you said it out loud, he would most likely destroy you."

Wuxian's eyes widen in fear, he wants to speak up, but his mind is still reeling regarding Jiang Wanyin's previous statement.

*'Why doesn't he think I'm a servant? I know at one point we considered each other brother's, but he knew that I was only ever groomed to serve him. Madame Yu made sure of it. I mean, sure, it bothered me in the beginning, but if being a servant meant that I could be Jiang Cheng's right-hand man till the end, I was fine with it.... When we were younger, he would yell at those who called me a servant boy... But I always thought it was because he didn't want others to speak ill of the Yunmeng Jiang's head disciple since it would reflect badly on the sect.'*

Chenqing scrutinizes the Yunmeng Jiang Sect leader.

"You must give something up in return."

Jiang Wanyin turns his head towards the flute spirit with narrowed eyes, and Wuxian finds his voice.

"No one is giving up anything!" He declares. "The thing I threatened Suibian about was already shown in the viewing, okay? So you don't have to worry about it."

*'Not like it's really any of your business anyway... You no longer consider me family.'*

"What was it then?" Questions Wanyin, turning his glare away from Chenqing towards Wuxian.

"The dogs," replies Wuxian much too quickly and obviously without thinking.

Jiang Cheng raises an eyebrow, and Wei Ying knows that he isn't fooling the purple-robed cultivator.

"What is it that I have to give up?" Asks Wanyin to the weapon spirits.

"Why do you care so much?" Inquires Wuxian in an attempt at stalling Jiang Cheng so that he can figure out a way to switch this conversation to a different topic.

Sandu Sengshou's jaw clenches.

It's a viable question that the juniors, Wen Ning, and the Lan brothers also want to know the answer to.

"I can show you why he cares so much," enounces Chenqing. Waiting until she locks eyes with the Jiang Sect leader before continuing. "You will give up what our Master has given up: protection against the revealment of your vulnerability."

"We will warn you, however," adds Suibian, "that what you're asking to see, that of which our Master hasn't *ever* wanted anyone to know, is not something that will be shown hurriedly or carelessly. We are going to build up to it, shaping the way towards what occurred through many diverse perspectives, yours being one of them. Do you understand?"

*'Good. That means I have time to figure out a plan before they show everyone what I did when I... Fuck, I don't know what I'll do if I don't figure a way out of here before then. Curse my stupid weapons! I swear they obtained their nosiness from observing Nie Huaisang.'*

Wanyin nods.

"Are we in agreement then?" Probes Chenqing.

"We are," responds Jiang Cheng.



"Good."

Chenqing snaps her fingers, and the screen lights up once again.

## Chapter End Notes

Zhiji = the one who knows me/soulmate/confidant.

Zi Zhihu = violet spider

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Drop comments, theories, or suggestions down below! I love reading them! I want to know where y'all think this is going. 🤔🤔

Editors note: hope you guys enjoyed :>

If you see that I made a mistake in relation to the Chinese terms I use, please let me know!

We hope you have a great day/night and that those who celebrated it had a great Halloween! 💜💜💜

# Could've. Would've. Should've.

## Chapter Notes

I'm so mean.

I apologize while simultaneously revelling in the emotional torture I am subjecting you to.

Have a happy, not so happy, reading! :D

SONG: Before You Go by Lewis Capaldi

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See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

**The display shows the remains of Guanyin Temple with the cluster of all those that were present that day, dusting themselves off and regaining their composure after what they had all just witnessed and learned.**

**Wei Wuxian is innocent.**

**The hand belonged to the deceased Chifeng-Zun.**

**Jin Guangyao was the evil mastermind behind so many deaths.**

**Su She and Xue Yang were direct accomplices.**

**The cultivation world's Chief Cultivator had been a murderer and a schemer, having fooled everyone as if it was simple child's play.**

**Truths mixed with lies and lies disguised as truths.**

**All revealed in the place where the real villain had been born.**

“I still remember that day like it was yesterday,” comments Zizhen.

“Just thinking about it gives me a headache,” mutters Jin Ling.

**The scene zooms in on Jiang Wanyin being helped up by Jin Rulan.**

**They check each other over for injuries. With a squeeze to the shoulder and an empty threat, Wanyin sends his nephew over to go and check on his friends.**

“Aww, look at you being coddled like the Mistress you are,” teases Jingyi.

“I will strike you so hard you won’t remember your own name,” darkly responds Rulan.

“Come now, you two,” lightly scolds Sizhui.

Zizhen snorts at how quickly the two boys listen to the eldest of the group, and they all bring their attention back to the screen.

(It is highly suggested that you listen to the following song either during or before you read the next parts. The song is: Before You Go by Lewis Capaldi.)

**The soft sound of guitar strings makes its way throughout the room and is quickly accompanied by a deep dulcet voice as the display focuses on Jiang Wanyin as he looks down at the rubble of the temple.**

**I fell by the wayside, like everyone else.**

“Huh...You actually have a nice singing voice Jiujiu.”

“I will break your legs, brat.”

Rulan rolls his eyes.

“...Yes Jiujiu, sorry Jiujiu.”

**Wanyin turns his attention to Wei Wuxian, who is with the juniors, while Lan Wangji has gone to check on Zewu-Jun.**

**His brows furrow, and his nostrils flare.**

**I hate you, I hate you, I hate you.**

Wuxian flinches, and Lan Wangji looks extremely tense. He's most likely holding himself back from doing something he might not necessarily regret but that his husband would disagree with.

**He curls his fists and looks down at Zidian.**

**But I was just kidding myself.**

Wuxian eyes go wide, and his mouth falls into an ‘o’ shape as he sneaks a glance towards Jiang Wanyin.

The sect leader’s face is impassive as he stares at the screen.

The juniors make sure to stay quiet and very still. These are some stormy waters that they’ve tried to help their seniors cross but have so far failed in doing.

Jin Ling looks a little too hopefully up at the display.

*‘Perhaps this screening will help Dajiu and Jiujiu make up!’*

**The scene changes to a younger Jiang Wanyin sitting in Wei Wuxian’s room in Lotus Pier.**

**He’s sitting on the bed, polishing Chenqing, meaning that this moment must have occurred after Wuxian’s death.**

Wuxian is bewildered. Why would Sect Leader Jiang take such good care of his demonic weapon? After everything he did, he thought that Wanyin would destroy all of his possessions. Perhaps trash his room or use it for storage since it was one of the few rooms that hadn’t been too severely affected by the burning of Lotus Pier.

**He fiddles with the tassel attached to the end of the instrument with a forlorn expression.**

**Our every moment, I start to replay.  
'Cause now that you’re gone all I**

**hear are the words that I needed to say.**

This makes Wuxian pause. Does-Is he-...?

Was Jiang-Zongzhu actually *sad* that he died???

Wuxian thought that Wanyin would be celebrating his death, right alongside the rest of the cultivation world. He, above everyone else, would have good reason to.

He's so confused and is trying his hardest not to stare openly at the purple-robed cultivator from across the table. Instead, he keeps his attention on the screen, bitterly swallowing down his growing sense of hope.

**He switches his gaze to the side, violet-grey eyes falling upon his own reflection thanks to a mirror hung on the wall.**

**He looks terribly sad and exhausted.**

Jin Ling leans into his Jiujiu's side. His uncle has never spoken to him about how hard it was to raise him after the death of his family. But after seeing such an expression, Rulan no longer feels the need to ask.

His uncle doesn't move. Although his face is blank, his posture is straight and rigid. It seems this viewing is affecting him more than he's letting on.

**When I hurt under the surface, like troubled water running cold~.**

**He returns his attention back to the flute.**

**Well, time can heal, but this  
won't~.**

*'Ah... Of course. It's stupid of me to think that Sect leader Jiang and I could ever reconcile... I don't deserve his forgiveness anyway.'*

Wanyin looks across the table at Wuxian. Seeing the dejected expression, he opens his mouth to say something, then thinks better of it and looks back towards the screen.

**The scene zooms in on his purple robes and then zooms back out of said robes to show that the display has returned to the day at the Temple.**

**Sandu Sengshou looks towards the demonic cultivator as he ruffles Jin Ling's hair, prepared to leave the premises with Hanguang-Jun and the younger Lan's.**

**With a determined expression, Wanyin takes large strides towards the shorter male.**

The viewers are confused. This definitely isn't what happened that day.

**Wuxian tenses, and then his eyes widen as Jiang Wanyin takes hold of the other's sleeve with an expression bordering on imploration**

**So, before you go~.**

He places his free hand over his heart; shoulder's hunching into himself. His voice is dripping with emotion.

**Was there something I could've said to make your heart beat better? If only I'd had known you were the storm to the weather.**

Wanyin feels... Defenceless. As if his walls have been torn down to show what he tries so hard to hide.

The screen is showing what he's always wanted deep down. What he should've done, what could've happened if only...

He sighs and turns his attention to Wuxian, curiosity unable to be curbed.

Wuxian's eyes are wide and disbelieving. He looks... small and painfully hopeful. His gaze is glued to the screen as he seems to be trying to memorize everything that is being shown.

A small spark of hope ignites inside Jiang Cheng.

**The music continues softly in the background as the scene changes to Jiang Cheng standing inside the Demon-Slaughtering Cave near the entrance. His back is turned to Wei Wuxian, who is in the cave, looking thin and tired, yet expression unwavering in its resoluteness.**

**"Wen Ning and Wen Qing saved us. The best decision is to stay here and lay low."**



The juniors can't help but do a double-take. In the previous viewings, they saw their Laoshi in many different ways, but he looks so sickly in this current scene.

*This is the man the cultivation world feared? It looks like a strong gust of wind could knock him down. The teens feel sick to their stomachs and angry towards the cultivation world. A world that is supposed to uphold righteousness and justice, yet they condemned Senior Wei at every turn without evidence. Using their prejudices as justification.*

They turn away from the screen to glimpse at their Laoshi. He looks pale and drained as if he already knows what's about to happen and loathes the thought of having to watch it happen again.

To the junior's surprise, Jiang Wanyin looks the same.

**Back still to his brother, Wanyin sneers.**

**“For how long?! Wuxian, the only decision should be for you to leave the Wen's! They are hated! No one will speak for them, nor for those who defend them! If you are on their side, *I* will not be able to defend *you* !”**

*‘Oh...It seems Jiang-Gongzi simply wanted to protect Wei-Gongzi...He does care for Wei-Ge, just in a different manner. In some ways, his aggressiveness sort of reminds me of Jiejie,’* thinks Wen Ning.

**“Then don't.”**

Lan Xichen blinks. Why wouldn't Wei Wuxian want the protection of his brother? Wuxian is an intelligent man. Xichen knows that the demonic cultivator most likely knew that tensions were rising between him and the cultivation world. It would be beneficial for him to cut ties with the Wens.

*'I never fully understood why Wuxian was so loyal to the Wen remnants... But then again, I never took the time to stop and look . They were all disabled and harmless; we were absolute monsters towards them and Young Master Wei.'*

**Jiang Cheng whips around and looks at the other with angry astonishment.**

**“What?” He spits coldly.**

**“If I defect, Yunmeng Jiang will have no political ties to the Yiling Patriarch,” explains Wuxian calmly. “As Clan leader, you would have safer ground to stand on, and my doings would not reflect on the sect.”**

*'Oh, Wei Ying. You are so incredibly selfless and kind. This world has committed so many wrongs against you, my Airen. And from what I am coming to understand, you still have yet to catch a break. I hope you will be able to forgive me for my unintentional ignorance.'*

Thinking back, Jiang Cheng was young, impulsive, angry, scared, and hurt. He had just gained control of the Sect through extremely unwanted ways. All he wanted was for things to go back to normal or for his family to at least be the one thing to stay the same. But then Wuxian went off with the Wen's and Shijie got married, Wanyin had felt alone, and all his bottled up emotions were fired upon Wuxian.

Jiang Cheng feels ashamed of himself. Especially since his inability to acknowledge and recognize his flow of emotions always ended up being pushed onto Wei Wuxian to deal with. It was one of the reasons why he considered Wuxian his best friend. The other would always be very understanding and never take his harsh words for what they were, because he knew that Jiang Cheng was simply having trouble expressing what he was feeling.

Either way, it was unfair to impose such things upon the, at-the-time, young shoulders of Wei Wuxian. And from what the last few hours have shown him, it seems to Wanyin that some comments did, in fact, end up hurting the shorter male, even though he never outwardly showed it or mentioned it.

**[ *And what about Jiejie?! What about me?! We are your family, not them! What about the promise you made to me about being by my side as my subordinate, like our fathers once were to each other?!* ]**

If Wanyin hadn't been feeling exposed before, he does now. He has come to understand why Wuxian hates these viewings. They dig through everything you've wanted to say but never could and then display it for all to comment, digest, and ridicule. Not that there is any of that going on since the people who would do such things are still frozen by the resentful energy. But it still doesn't make this any easier for Jiang Cheng.

Wuxian is trying very hard not to cry. He's done really well so far; he hadn't even shed a tear when he had to re-live the murder of his parents. And, perhaps on any other day, he would be grateful that he can finally learn what goes on inside the head of the man who once saw him as a brother but now only sees a stranger.

But that's not the case. If anything, hearing Jiang Wanyin's thoughts only makes this moment even worse than he remembers it. He wants the demonic cultivator on the screen to respond to Wanyin, to assure him that he is still his brother no matter what, that he wants to become his subordinate more than anything!

But it doesn't happen.

Obviously.

Wuxian has never been able to do anything right in his life, and this viewing isn't going to magically get him to start now.

**Wanyin laughs mirthlessly.**

It makes the Juniors and even Lan Xichen flinch.

**“So it's that easy for you. To cut ties, just like that. And for what?”**

**He points heatedly towards the Wen Remnant's cottages and farming land.**

**“For them?!”**

***[ Have they fought side by side with you?! Have they grown up with you?! Have they shared Jiejie's Lotus and Rib soup with you?! Have they shared their hopes, fears, and dreams with you the way we have?! ]***

**“Is your loyalty so easy to give away?!”**

Jiang Wanyin's words and thoughts are remarkably contrasting in nature. His thoughts are those of a hurting brother, while his words are sharp and bitter, aimed to inflict pain.

Wuxian blinks rapidly to stop any tears from falling. Jiang Wanyin had been hurting so terribly, and it was all because of him.

God, he hates himself so much.

Wanyin refuses to look anywhere but at the screen.

**Wuxian doesn't respond, his face shows nothing of what he might be thinking, but his hand is clenched tightly around his flute to the point where his knuckles are white.**

**Jiang Cheng shakes his head disbelievingly and turns away from Wuxian, prepared to walk out of the cave and away from his brother. Cutting off all ties as the other has suggested.**

**He then stops, takes a deep breath, and pivots his body. Right shoulder towards Wuxian, while his left is towards the exit.**

Once again, Wuxian and Wanyin are caught off-guard. This is not how that meeting had gone all those years ago.

**The music grows louder.**

**Wanyin locks eyes with his brother, anger gone. Instead, it's been shattered into vulnerability. His eyebrows pull together, and the corners of his mouth draw downwards as he tries one last time to reason with his best friend.**

**So, before I go~. Is there something that I can say to make it all stop hurting?**

**He strides towards Wuxian and pulls him into a tight hug. His brother returns the embrace just as tightly as they hold onto each other, knowing that they may not see one another for a while, considering their circumstances.**

**It kills me how our minds can make us feel so worthless.**

**They lean out of the hug and clasp each other on the shoulders one last time.**

**So, before I go.**

**Wanyin leaves the Burial Mounds; however, unlike what had originally happened, they part amicably. Both knowing, without a doubt, that although no longer bound politically, they still have each other's backs.**

This is cruel.

That's what Wuxian has decided. It's one thing to want to go back and change such moments, but it's another to actually see what could've been if he wasn't such a fuck-up.

In the back of his mind, a small voice wants to remind him that this is Jiang Wanyin's viewing. That this is most likely showing what the Jiang Sect leader wished had happened. That this is proof that they could still be brothers again.

Wuxian smothers the voice into oblivion. It's only ever brought about expectations that always get inevitably crushed. There's never been any point in listening to it.

**The scene shifts to Wanyin walking around a war camp during the Sunshot Campaign, looking for his brother.**

**Was never the right time, whenever  
I'd call.**

**When he catches a glimpse of black and red robes, he speedwalks towards them.**

**"Wuxian!"**

**The demonic cultivator doesn't stop. It's as if he hasn't heard the other even though Wanyin spoke quite loudly.**

Confused, Sizhui asks, albeit hesitantly, if his Baba truly didn't hear Sect Leader Jiang calling for him. Worried that perhaps he overstepped, he goes to retract his question when he surprisingly gets a response. However, it's clear that his Baba is distracted and probably doesn't even realize that he answered Sizhui's unknowingly invasive question.

“I most likely didn’t hear him. Back in those days, the dead were much louder than the living,” he mumbles absent-mindedly.

He doesn’t see the incredibly concerned expressions he gets in response to his reply.

*[ I am a Sect leader now, I can’t go around chasing him like I did when we were kids. ]*

Feeling irritated and a little hurt, he heads to Chifeng-Zun’s tent to see if more preparations for their upcoming battles need to be done.

The display goes dark, and a young smiley Wuxian with his arm around a grinning teenage Jiang Cheng appears on the screen.

**Went little, by little, by little  
until there was nothing at all.**

After every repetition of the word “little”, the two figures grow older and apart. Until their smiles are replaced with joyless expressions and Jiang Wanyin is at one end of the screen with Wei Wuxian, in Mo Xuanyu’s body, at the other end.

To see how close and happy they were and then how far they grew apart breaks the hearts of the juniors and Wen Ning. Not to mention how miserable they look when they aren’t by each other’s side just makes it worse.

The scene then changes to a dishevelled Jiang Wanyin walking back and forth in his room, Suibian clenched tightly in his grasp. Expression a mix of confusion, anger, despair, and regret, he pulls the sword out of its sheath for what must be the hundredth time that night.

Wuxian is still slightly angry at Wen Ning for telling Sandu Sengshou about his secret. It wasn't his secret to tell, and it definitely didn't do anything other than hurt Wanyin more than Wuxian already had.

**Wanyin stares back at the light purple eyes reflected through the metal of the sword.**

**Our every moment, I start to replay.  
But all I can think about is seeing  
that look on your face.**

**Purple eyes shift into molten silver as the reflection on the sword zooms out to show Wuxian's last moments. The ones Jiang Cheng had personally witnessed thirteen years ago, where Wuxian is smiling that horribly calm and somewhat relieved smile before his body and soul are ripped and shredded into dust.**

**The scene blurs and zooms out of the sword and back to Wanyin in his room. This time, he's leaving his quarters and heading to the Grand Hall, where his Sect is hosting a discussion conference. This is about a year and a half after the happenings at Guanyin Temple.**

**As Jiang Cheng walks across one of the courtyards towards his destination, he sees familiar black and red robes in his peripheral vision. Before he can decide against it, his head has already turned towards the demonic cultivator's direction.**

Wuxian remembers that day. It was only through a lot of convincing on Lan Zhan's part that he decided to accompany his husband to the conference. He didn't think that he was worthy enough to be allowed to set foot back in Lotus Pier. But his husband wanted him to come, and he can't ever deny his Baobei. Plus, Wuxian didn't want to tell his Lan-Er-Gege about his insecurities, knowing full well that they would only bring about concern on his Zhang Fu's beautiful face.

He hadn't realized that Jiang Wanyin had seen him. He's worried that perhaps he did overstep, and now the other is angry.



**Jiang Cheng is honestly surprised. He didn't think that Wuxian would come to the conference. But, of course, it's evident that he's only here with his husband and won't actually be attending the event. Still, it makes Wanyin's chest hurt at the thought that he might've not even known that the smaller male had made an appearance if not for his accidental yet precise timing.**

Wuxian doesn't understand.

Did-did Jiang Wanyin *want* him to... No that can't be.

**This just further proves how far they are from being the brothers they once were.**

*'And that's the godawful truth isn't it,'* morosely thinks Wuxian.

**Wei Wuxian is sitting on a bench, gazing towards a cluster of Yunmeng disciples. He has a small smile on his face, but it does nothing to hide how his expression is a mix between nostalgic, downcast, and resigned.**

**Wanyin can easily guess which memories are floating inside the other's head; the same are flashing through his.**

**When you hurt under the surface.  
Like troubled water running cold~.**

**Wanyin turns away and heads towards the conference, heart heavy and eyes burning.**

**Well, time can heal, but this  
won't~.**

He'd heard those words earlier, but they hurt even more as they are repeated. Wuxian knows that after all the shit he's done, he will never get back the brotherhood he always cherished.

He. *Fucking*. Knows.

So why does he have to sit here and have it shoved down his throat again and again?

*'Why am I even questioning it? The answer has been spewed and yelled at me many times before. I am a demon that doesn't deserve happiness or peace... It's as simple as that.'*

Wuxian sighs deeply, grabbing Lan Wangji's attention. Hanguang-Jun wants to make his husband feel better, but he is out of his depths. Here he is, 16 years later, and he's still as useless as he was before when it comes to making sure his Wei Ying is happy.

He grabs his Baobao's hand and squeezes it, hoping that it offers even a bit of comfort to the other.

**The scene changes to a dark Yiling alleyway. The sky is overcast with clouds, rain making the atmosphere as depressing as the two young forms sitting on the ground feel.**

**Teenage Wei Wuxian and Jiang Cheng sit side by side; clothes covered in dirt, slashes, and too much blood. Wuxian has a dark bruise forming around his neck and Wanyin has a bleeding cut on his arm, but neither seems to care.**

"I don't understand...When is this?" Questions Zizhen.

“Yiling. After the fall of Lotus Pier,” supplies Lan Wangji.

Wanyin is too preoccupied with his turbulent thoughts to question how Hanguang-Jun knows this, and Wuxian desperately wants to close his eyes and shut everything out.

He hates that alleyway. If he’s honest, he hates that fucking town.

Yes, the villagers were decent and kind when he and A-Ning had to go down there and sell whatever meagre produce they had grown in the Burial Mounds. But it’s still the place where he was left behind after his parents died. It’s still where he scavenged for food and ran from dogs when he lived on the streets.

But most of all, it’s the place where he lost his brother and whatever chances he had of having a future. One where he could walk along the busy broad road instead of the single-plank bridge that led to his death along with those he let down.

**Both have dried tear tracks staining their cheeks, eyes hollow and grief-stricken. Wuxian, with visible effort, stands up and places a Bamboo hat onto his head. He crouches down in front of his brother and speaks to him softly.**

**“I’m going to get us some food and supplies. Stay here, okay?”**

**He receives no acknowledgement.**

**“Please, Jiang Cheng, I-I can’t- I just-,” he takes a shuddering breath. “Please?” He begs. “Don’t go anywhere, alright?” His voice is a strained whisper, an attempt at keeping more unshed tears at bay.**

**Once again, the slumped, red-rimmed-eyed Sect heir, now forcibly turned Sect Leader, gives no response.**

**With a dejected sigh, Wuxian stands and walks towards the exit of the alley.**

Wuxian and Wanyin know that this is the moment that opens the floodgates of the collapse of their brotherhood. The moment they both wish they could go back in time and redo.

The display shares the same idea.

**So, before you go~.**

**“Wuxian, wait!”**

Wei Wuxian and Jiang Wanyin, having had lowered their heads under the immense sorrow they feel, snap their heads back towards the display gapingly.

**Eyes gaining a bit more life, Wuxian turns back towards his brother, who is standing up from his hunched position.**

Wanyin approaches the other and looks at the bruises around his neck.

**Is there something that I can say to  
make our hearts beat better?**

**“I-I’m sorry. None of this is your fault. It isn’t anyone’s fault but the Wens.”**

Wuxian is holding his breath. This can’t possibly be what Jiang Wanyin wished he had done... Can it?

These are words Wuxian has only ever dreamed of hearing. Yet, he knows he doesn't deserve them. He doesn't, and has never, deserved absolution.

It was *all* his fault.

It will *always* be his fault.

It has only ever been *his* fault.

**If only we'd have known there'd be a storm to the weather. So, before you go~!**

Wuxian opens his mouth to protest, but Wanyin doesn't let him.

**Is there something that I can say to make it all stop hurting?**

**"I was, still am, grieving. But it doesn't excuse what I did or what Mother said. Lotus Pier is... Was, as much as a home to you as it was to me. You and A-Jie are all I have left, and damn it! I refuse to lose any more family!"**

Wanyin can't help but look towards Wuxian. A big part of him wants the demonic cultivator to hear these words and understand that Wanyin means them. They might be coming from a younger version of him on a screen, but they're the truth.

The smaller part knows that he doesn't deserve Wuxian's forgiveness, not after everything he's done to him.

Wuxian's face is... Blank. It makes Wanyin feel uneasy.

*'Does he think these words are years too late? I-i know they are, but... But I also can't help but hope that he believes them. That he believes that we are still family. I want to be family again... Does he?'*

**It kills me how our minds can make us feel so worthless.**

**At this point, Wanyin is breathing heavily while crying, waiting for Wuxian, whose hat is covering half of his face, to give him an answer of some kind.**

**Between one moment and the next, Wuxian rips the hat off his head, tears streaming down his face, and flings himself at his brother. They fall to the ground, but neither break the hug. Instead, they clutch onto each other's robes as though if they were to let go, one would surely disappear to someplace where the other wouldn't be able to reach.**

Wuxian's throat feels tight, and his eyes burn. He wants to believe that this is what Sandu Sengshou wanted. He wants to believe that Jiang Wanyin means the words that his younger version said.

Jiang Wanyin stares at the hugging teens on the screen and desperately wants to push his chair back and do the same. He misses Wuxian. He wants to believe that despite everything, Wuxian misses him too.

The Juniors, Lan Xichen, and Wen Ning can't help but smile at the heartfelt scene.

**All of a sudden, a violent glitch muddles the screen.**

“What’s happening?” Worries Zizhen.

“Is that supposed to happen?” Inquiries Jingyi

Before anyone can turn to ask Suibian and Chenqing, their questions are answered.

**When the glitch vanishes, it’s as if the heartfelt moment between the two brothers never happened. Jiang Cheng is still curled up on the dirty ground as Wei Wuxian, with hunched shoulders and a mournful expression, exits the alley to get supplies.**

**Jiang Cheng lifts his eyes towards his departing brother and then looks back down at his blood-stained robes, body too exhausted to move, eyes dried up of tears.**

**So, before you go.**

“That...That was just cruel,” brokenly mumbles a sobbing Zizhen.

Wuxian feels a single, unruly tear course down his cheek. He wipes it away roughly.

*‘Of course. Why would I think, even for a moment, that Wanyin would ever want to be my brother again? I am a murderer, it-... It’s good that he wants nothing to do with me. He’s better off that way... Everyone probably is, to be honest.’*

Wanyin looks at Wuxian and wants to throw a chair at the screen.

*‘What the fuck was that?! Why the hell would it-?!? FUCK! Now, what does Wuxian think? God, I thought this viewing was supposed to help! To clear shit up, not complicate it even more!’*

**The screen changes to the inside of the Guanyin Temple before it was destroyed.**

**Wanyin is in a corner beside Jin Ling and Zewu-Jun. Their spiritual powers are sealed, and Jin Guangyao is spitting out truths and confessions with the knowledge that each word is as sharp as a knife, cutting and slicing deep wounds into his kidnapped guests.**

**Wanyin turns his gaze towards Wuxian, who is leaning his weight against Hanguang-Jun. He looks pale but angry, hands shaking as he takes deep, controlled breaths. Wanyin doesn't know if it's to control his anger or his emotional pain.**

**Sandu Sengshou tries to block out Guangyao's words, but they are the irrevocable truth.**

**"Sect Leader Jiang, if only your attitude towards your Shixiong was just a bit better, showing everyone that your bond was too strong to be broken for them to have a chance, or if you exhibited just a bit more tolerance after what happened, things wouldn't have become what they were. Oh, speaking of it, you were also a main force of the siege at the Burial Mounds..."**

**The viewers have never been happier that a man is dead.**

**Xichen might have conflicting emotions, but he has come to terms with the fact that the man he considered a brother was a monster. One that ruined lives and families, including his own. He has never wished death upon anyone, but Xichen does hope that Guangyao stays dead.**

**Filled with guilt, regret and shame, Wanyin's voice rings out strongly. Sorrowful wonder and despair merge themselves into his words.**

**Would we be better off by now if I'd  
let my walls come down? Maybe I**



**guess we'll never know. You know,  
you know~.**

The emotion in his voice is heartbreaking and so incredibly moving. But the words piss Wanyin off.

*'But I want to know! Goddamnit, Wuxian, if you would just show some type of emotion on your stupid face, I would be able to figure out whether or not you would welcome an apology! I want to know if I can fix this! I want to fix this so fucking badly!'*

**The display moves its attention from Jiang Wanyin to Wei Wuxian. The demonic cultivator looks towards the injured Jiang Sect Leader. His heart aches for his Shidi and for all that fills the immense gap between them. One he desperately wishes he could cross and go back in time to destroy.**

Wanyin and Wuxian freeze.

*'What the-? I thought this was Jiang Wanyin's viewing!'*

*'He wants to... He wants to reconcile as well!?'*

**The scene shifts to how the display began. The Temple is rubble, and everyone is taking account of themselves and their injuries. After checking on the juniors and ruffling Jin Ling's hair as a goodbye, Wei Wuxian and Lan Zhan start walking down the hill, away from the remains of the Temple and the mess the revelations left behind.**

**Wuxian suddenly stops walking and turns around, only catching the view of Jiang Wanyin's back as he and Jin Rulan leave the grounds from another direction.**

**Wuxian's voice rings out throughout the room, expression one of longing and sadness.**

**Before I go~. Was there something I could've said to make your heart beat better? If only I'd had known I'd be the storm to the weather.**

The voice and the context, alongside the knowledge that both men want to be brothers again, give the viewers goosebumps.

Jiang Wanyin wants to cry.

Wei Wuxian is terrified. He doesn't know if he'll be able to handle Wanyin's rejection of his hope of becoming ~~brother's~~ friends again.

**Wuxian turns away to follow Lan Zhan down the path heading towards Yunping City. He takes a deep breath, and the screen goes dark as he closes his eyes.**

**When he opens them, the display is from his point of view. As he looks around, the viewers can see that Wuxian is back in the Demon Slaughtering Cave. The perspective changes to an omniscient one, as it exhibits that the scene is back to when Wuxian tells Jiang Cheng the benefits of him defecting from the Sect.**

**“What?” Spits Jiang Cheng, coldly.**

**“If I defect, Yunmeng Jiang will have no political ties to the Yiling Patriarch. As Clan leader....”**

***[ What am I saying? I don't want this! What I want is to go home, back to Lotus Pier with Jiang Cheng! I want to return to my family, to see Shijie again! But... I can't leave the Wens behind either. They've become my family too. ]***

*'Oh, Wei-Gongzi... My family never wanted to rip you away from yours. If only you had told Jiejie and me about this meeting! We would've tried to figure something out. Why must you make yourself suffer alone?'*

The juniors are bawling.

**“Is your loyalty so easy to give away?!”**

**[ *Of course not! I would die for you and Shijie!* ]**

Wangji flinches slightly, and Wanyin feels like an idiot because fuck if he hadn't already known that.

*'I was such a blind fool! He worshipped the ground A-Jie walked on, and he would become a source of ridicule in a heartbeat in order to grab unwanted attention aimed at me towards himself. The limit to his loyalty is boundless, and to have it is the greatest honour. Yet I threw it away with my thoughtlessness.'*

**[ *You are an incredible Sect leader, and I will, and have always been, proud to call you my brother... But I am ruining your hard work. If I defect then... Then it'll make things easier for you. That's all I've ever wanted, to make life simpler and easier for those I care for.* ]**

All at Wuxian's table, whether they already knew it or not, are finally starting to understand how phenomenal of a person Wei Wuxian is.

And how the world has done nothing but hurt him for it.

**Jiang Cheng shakes his head disbelievingly and walks out of the cave with disgust.**

Wuxian watches him leave as tears stream silently down his face. He sings, voice submerged in anguish.

So, before you go~. Was there something I could've said to make it all stop hurting? It kills me how my mind can make me feel so worthless.

He leans his shoulder against the entrance of the cave and wraps his arms around himself. His withdrawn expression of sadness breaks as he squeezes his eyes shut, noiseless weeping turning into quiet sobbing.

So, before you go.


With one last strum of guitar, the display goes dark.

#### Chapter End Notes

You guuuuuuuyssss! We're at 372 FREAKING kudos!! Y'all are so sweet! And the comments! Omg, the comments!!! I love reading them so much! PLEASE keep them coming! :D

Drop comments, theories, or suggestions down below! I love reading them!!


If you see that I made a mistake in relation to the Chinese terms I use, please let me know!

Hope you have a great day/night!! 

# Snacks And Time-Outs

## Chapter Notes

I wasn't planning on posting until next week, but I finished my before last exam (YAY!) and felt like celebrating, lol! This chapter is only 8 pages instead of 10 or more. Yes, it's shorter, but that simply means that I get to divide the Yunmeng Bros confrontation into two parts :D

Also, I just wanted to take a moment to thank all of you for the amount of unexpected support this fic is getting! It's now at 520 FREAKING kudos and 134... ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-FOUR bookmarks. i- Wow. This has been so much fun to write so far, and I'm super happy y'all are enjoying it as much as I am! THANK YOU SO MUCH 

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I'm not the greatest when it comes to writing Lan Zhan's POV, so I apologize in advance if it's too OOC. Also, this chap. is a whole lot of inner monologue and just monologue in general. I hope y'all still like it!

Enjoy!

~~~~~

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

Tense silence surrounds the members at the table. All eyes are on the demonic cultivator and the Yunmeng sect leader; both ensure their attention strays away from the other.

It's infuriating.

So Jin Ling decides to do something about it. Him being the angelic nephew he is and all that.

The sound of the Jin leader's chair screeching backwards makes everyone jump. The young man ignores the questioning looks from his friends and family and keeps his gaze on the demonic and spiritual weapons in the corner. Chenqing looks mildly amused as if she already knows what he's planning; Suibian smiles encouragingly.

Rulan bows to them, to the surprise of those at his table.

"Would you do us the favour of providing us with some food? I don't know about everyone else, but I'm starving."

Jin Ling wishes someone would paint Jingyi's open-mouthed bewilderment; he looks like such an idiot, making it hard for the Jin to keep a straight face.

Suibian bows back to the teen, thankfully playing along with where the golden-robed cultivator is going.

"Of course, Jin-Zongzhu! If you'll follow me?"

The sword spirit nods to Chenqing. The flute spirit stands from her seat and moves around the table she was sitting at to place her hand on a stone wall. The black fog that exudes from her fingers dances along the wall into a rectangular shape and then disperses, leaving a door-shaped hole in its wake. She then walks into the hidden room, ignoring the astonished gasps behind her.

Suibian offers the group a thumbs up and follows his musical companion. Jin Ling, not one to back out of a plan, especially seeing as it's going so smoothly, looks towards his friends, hoping they understand what he needs. Sizhui, always quick on the uptake, stands from his seat. Zizhen soon follows, and then so does Jingyi.

"I could eat!" States Zizhen with a smile.

"Mn! Me too!"

"Yea! Plus, whatever food they got in that secret room smells delicious!"

With a thankful smile towards his best friends, Jin Ling heads towards the room Suibian and Chenqing disappeared into.

The adults at the table are still bewildered, but once the Ghost General stands to leave with the children, they can do nothing but rise from their chairs as well.

Lan Xichen turns to his brother.

"What about Shufu?"

"Will bring food back for him."

With a nod to each other, the two Lan brothers follow the juniors with Wuxian and Wanyin beside them.

Lan Zhan goes to hold his husband's hand, but once he passes through the door, his hand only catches air. He looks to see that his Airen is no longer at his side. Now on high alert, he turns around and notices that the door he just passed through has disappeared.

"Don't worry," says Chenqing. "They can come in and join us once they've finished talking."

Wangji turns to see a buffet of food; there are traditional Lan and Gusu delicacies as well as some from Lanling, Yunmeng, Qinghe, etc. The juniors look like children in a candy store, basically drooling over the sight of the food and piling it on their plates. The Ghost General sits at one of the three tables and offers a timid but kind smile towards Suibian as he sits beside him.

Suibian starts speaking animatedly with the juniors as they settle down beside him and Wen Ning, most likely sharing stories or offering wisdom, Lan Zhan doesn't know. Xichen joins them after procuring some food of his own.

It seems Jiang Wanyin was left out of the room as well. Figures.

Wangji turns towards Chenqing, who is lazying about on a cot made out of resentful energy. She looks relaxed yet still retains a sense of lethallness about her. It reminds the Lan sect leader of his Wei Ying of sixteen years ago.

"Before you say anything," speaks Chenqing, "Sandu Sengshou's spiritual energy has been sealed. So has everyone else' although you've all been too occupied to realize it."

Wangji blinks.

He reaches out towards his golden core, but as revealed, his meridians have been blocked. He levels the flute spirit with a calculating stare.

"He can be hurt in other ways," he states. Knowing she'll catch onto who he's speaking about.

She sighs.

"Perhaps. But as we both know, Master is a strong one. In addition, after the last viewing, I doubt that the Jiang sect leader has any intention of inflicting any further pain upon his brother."

Wangji narrows his eyes.

"I understand your skepticism, but despite what you and Master think, Sandu Sengshou sees Master as a brother. Deep down, he always has. He simply allowed his grief and misplaced resentment to cover it up."

"...Misplaced?"



"While it may seem like Jiang Wanyin resents Master and has treated him poorly during their youth, the anger and jealousy that he felt in the past was caused by Yu Furen and the late Jiang-Zonghzu. When one cannot share their feelings of inadequacy with their mentally abusive parents, they tend to throw their emotions at the easiest target. In his case, it was Master. Yu Ziyuan and Jiang Fengmian only ever added fuel to the flames as both boys grew up."

Wangji takes a moment to swallow down the growing hate he has towards his Zhiji's surrogate guardians.

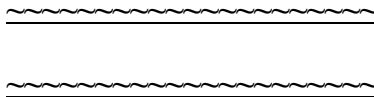
"Sandu Sengshou has never hated Master," continues Chenqing. "He's only ever had trouble expressing his feelings. You, of all people, know how that feels and struggle with it in different ways. While you remain silent under the inability of knowing how to express yourself properly, only ever saying what you mean, Jiang Wanyin does the opposite. He says too much yet never speaks his true thoughts. As Master has pointed out, perhaps not to either of you, but has always known and thought amusing, you and Sandu Sengshou are quite similar."

Before Wangji has the time to bristle at the comment, his son appears at his side.

"You should eat A-die\*. We can make up a plate full of Baba's favourite things while we wait for him, okay?"

His eyes soften. He loves how he can see both himself and Wei Ying in the young man, and similarly to his Airen, he cannot say no to his child's smile.

"Mn," he nods, allowing the younger Lan to pull him towards the tables of food.



Wei Wuxian really wishes he had a brush and ink on him. If he did, he would take this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to draw on the frozen faces of the stuck-up people in the room he has been unfairly locked in with.

In his personal non-biased opinion, sect leader Yao is long-past due for a makeover.

However, he isn't shameless enough to go looking through the robes of other frozen cultivators in hopes that they have the needed tools within their clothes. He's a respectable man, after all.

He tries not to snort too loudly at the lie. In reality, the only thing stopping him is Sect leader Jiang. They've seemed to come to an unspoken agreement that as long as one of them doesn't do something that would garner the attention of the other, they can remain in this awkward yet safe silence.

Wuxian is grateful for this and simultaneously hates it. He can't remember a time when he and Sandu Sengshou felt so incredibly uncomfortable around each other. Even during their ever-growing rift before he died, they were still able to tolerate the other's presence. Yea, maybe they'd get into fights, but at least they'd still talk to one another! This, however, is sad and slightly pathetic. And yet, he'd rather remain in this silence than face an angry and hurt Jiang Wanyin.

Yes, there are so many questions he wants to ask; so many misunderstandings he wishes he could clear up; and so many things that have been left unsaid on his part. But he'll keep quiet, nonetheless.

Sometimes keeping his mouth shut is the better alternative, which is something Madame Yu used to tell him all the time. Something he wishes he had adhered to much sooner. Perhaps if he had, the Wen's wouldn't have attacked Lotus Pier. Maybe if he'd kept his trap shut, the cultivation world wouldn't have seen him as a menacing enemy that could defeat them without the help of a sword. If only he'd kept his head down and bitten his tongue when Jiang Fengmian had called out his name in that cold, dirty alley, the lives of so many would've been spared. The lives of people who had deserved to live long, beautiful lives. If only...

Unfortunately, nothing can be done about it now, no matter how badly it plagues him at night and every other waking moment. He should be thankful for what he has now. An incredible

husband; a beautiful son; and a pack of adorable ducklings he gets to mentor ~~with the desperate hope that he won't ruin them like he's ruined every other good and pure thing in his life.~~

So far, he thinks he's been doing pretty well.

Or at least he was before his stupid fucking weapons decided to make their appearance known. As if being the most feared demonic weapon and the most well-known spiritual sword wasn't enough! They just *had* to make sure that all the Clan leaders knew of their existence and of the shitty life that was regrettably his. He's positive that *nobody* asked—especially him. The world was moving on from the disastrous events of the Guanyin Temple; he was keeping to himself just like everyone wanted, and he was... content.

Yes. Content.

But now his contentedness...? Is being threatened! So is the contentedness of everyone else in this stupidly big room. And he knows *for a fact* that his cave was *not* this freaking huge. If it was, he would've hidden the Dafan Wens inside it during the siege, keeping everyone alive to live for another day. Or maybe he would've used it for other practical uses. He doesn't know, but what he does know is that he's tired, hungry and slightly anxious, which is a great recipe for a grumpy Wei Wuxian.

Wait a minute! This is the perfect opportunity to find a way to destroy the giant screen! Admittedly, it'll be a tad bit difficult. He doubts Suibian and Chenqing would've left him in here without inserting the proper defences into it. But he's the Yiling Patriarch. He's *their* Master, not the other way around.

*'Hmm...Since I don't have my flute, I'll need to create an explosive talisman. I don't have one on me that would do the trick, but I could probably just whip one up real quick. Since I don't have ink, blood should work just fine. I need something sharp tho-'*

"Are you alright?"

Wuxian's thoughts screech to a halt. Out of everything he expected Jiang Wanyin to say; out of the many ways he thought the purple-robed cultivator would've started a conversation, he was not expecting it to be...thoughtful?

The question sounded somewhat stunted. It was audibly evident that the other was uncomfortable asking it, but he did it anyway, which was unexpected yet kind of nice.

"I'm just asking because I've never seen you so... quiet. It's weird."

Wuxian strongly wants to respond with a childish "you're weird" to lighten the atmosphere. But he doesn't know if that'll be welcomed. So instead, he casually does a full-body stretch, arms in the air, and grunts an unruffled "yea, I'm good".

*'...Nailed it,'* he thinks while mentally facepalming himself.

He discreetly glimpses towards Sandu Sensghou's direction in hopes of getting a feel for what the other's temperament is like. To his complete and utter bafflement, the older? Younger? Male looks frustrated.

Not the angry "why aren't you dead yet?" frustration he thought he was going to be subjected to. Instead, he's faced with the "furrowed brow, scrunched nose, on the verge of pouting," type of frustration that Jiang Wanyin used to have all the time as a kid. It usually meant that he wanted to say something but didn't know how to articulate it properly or wanted to share some heartfelt thought, like ~~Shijie~~ his sister, but would give up in the end. Deciding to throw a passive-aggressive compliment instead, or an insult accompanied by eyes softened in rare brotherly affection.

Wuxian is pretty sure that the last time he had been at the end of that type of look was before they were teenagers. He doubts that Jiang-Zongzhu is about to give him one of those looks at any point in his second (~~third~~) chance of existence. So he decides to try and help the other out by changing the discussion to a harmless one: How the fuck they got here.

"I was in the middle of signing off on reports when I started to feel tired. I had closed my eyes for a moment, and by the time I opened them again, I was here."

Wuxian nods in understanding.

"You?"

"Huh? Oh, I was sleeping."

Wanyin raises a single eyebrow. Wuxian is confused.

"....What?"

The sect leader shrugs and looks away.

"I just thought that you would've been... I don't know, celebrating or something."

Wuxian blinks.

Wanyin's assumption does make some sense. When they were younger, he would celebrate his birthday by drinking the night away, and then the sunrise away, and then sometimes, if he still had some drinking buddies left, they would drink the morning away too. Shi- Jiang Yanli would then usher the disciples out of his room and give him and Jiang Wanyin a cup of her Hangover-Curing Juice alongside her delicious Pork Rib soup. He and Sandu Sengshou would then spend the day lazying around with Maiden Jiang.

~~(He misses that so much it hurts)~~ It was nice.

"Nope," he responds, popping the p.

He would've added a joke about being too old to party all night, but the taller man speaks first.

"Sorry, that was stupid. I saw...We all...On the display, it-." He ends his broken-up sentence with an irritated growl.

"We don't need to do this."

Wanyin spins around so that he's now facing Wuxian, but he doesn't meet his eyes.

"Don't need to do what?"

"This," replies Wuxian while gesturing a hand between the two of them. "Just because they put us on a time-out or whatever doesn't mean that we need to talk."

He doesn't want Wanyin to feel any more discomfort. He knows that simply being subjected to his presence is difficult for the Sect leader.

Wanyin looks angry now. It's unfortunate but expected. It's also something Wuxian is a hell of a lot more used to. He knows how to behave around an angry Jiang Wanyin; he's lost when around an awkward one.

"Oh, of course, *you* don't want to talk," he scoffs stormily.

Wuxian shouldn't allow himself to be baited. He should just keep quiet. Be the bigger person. He should—

"What's *that* supposed to mean?"

Annnnddd grumpy Wei Wuxian is in the building!

"I mean that this is so like you! When there's something that needs to be addressed, you avoid it like the plague. But every other moment, you won't shut up! Or at least that's how you used to be."

The last part was muttered, but the cave is so big and quiet that their voices can't help but echo against the walls.

"At least that's better than having to walk around with a scowl permanently engraved on my face!"

"For the love of—! We're not 12! Frowning too deeply doesn't fucking mean that my face will be stuck that way!"

"You sure? I think the proof is in the mirror!"

"Fuck you, Wei Wuxian!"

"Right back at ya!"

"No! Seriously! You piss me off so fucking much!"

Wanyin starts to pace back and forth while his right thumb and index finger fiddles with Zidian.

"You come back from the dead thirteen years after dying, and the first thing you do is go off running to your precious fucking Hanguang-Jun!"

Wuxian opens his mouth to defend his husband since his name should never be accompanied by such foul language, but Wanyin presses on.

"Then you piece together the body and death of Chifeng-Zun; dump the motherload of all secrets upon my fucking shoulders—"

Wuxian flinches.

"—Uncover the biggest crime of the cultivation world within the span of a few days. And then leave without saying jackshit! I then assume that you'd go off to live your days with your Lan Wangji, but then I discover from a passer-by that you'd gone travelling for six months, without your Hanguang-Jun," the purple-robed cultivator starts ticking down his raised fingers. "Without your sword and without taking the time out of your oh-so-busy schedule to go and pay your respects to A-Jie!"

Wuxian doesn't understand. Does- Did Wanyin...? But he thought-

"I don't hear from you for two fucking years. Two. Whole. Fucking. Years. And then when I do, I end up learning that the perfect, happy life I thought you'd finally gotten was a bunch of bullshit!?"

He raises his arms in the air in outrage.

"That you're suffering *again* and decided not to tell anyone *again*! Is Lotus Pier really that terrible of a place?! Do you truly prefer to live under such unacceptable conditions instead of returning home?!"

Wanyin's voice cracks on the last word. Wuxian wants to cry.

The room is quiet except for the sound of Sandu Sensghou's harsh breathing. However, the anger he seemed to have an infinite supply of dwindles as his breathing regulates. He looks somewhat defeated.



"Wuxian... I-." He sighs heavily. "That last viewing. Everything that happened..."

Wanyin visibly steels himself and locks his eyes with Wuxian's wide, hopeful, disbelieving ones.

"Everything I said was true. Everything that was shown. Everything that was fucking *sung*, was all true. I... Oh, fuck it."

Before Wuxian can process Wanyin's words and the meanings behind them, he's swept into... a hug.

~~Jiang Zongzhu. Sect Leader Jiang. Sandu Sengshou. Jiang Wanyin.~~

*Jiang Cheng* is hugging *him*.

Wuxian cries.

## Chapter End Notes

A-die = dad/father

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Dang. That was kinda heavy, lol. It turned out much better than I expected :D

As always: Keep! The! Comments! Coming! They make my day! So do reviews!!!

Also, if you want, share theories on what you think will happen next!

I hope you have a great day/night! 💜💜💜

# Hey Everyone!

Sorry, everyone, this isn't a chapter it's just a heads up that I won't be updating until the New Year. The reason? I just finished a gruelling semester of university and I need time to just relax and not stress over everything lol, I hope y'all understand. This short hiatus, however, won't be for nothing. Hopefully, I'll be able to get ahead in my writing and come back to you guys with new chapters that you'll enjoy as much as previous ones if not more!

For those who celebrate it, I wish you a Merry Christmas, for others Happy Holidays and Happy Early New Year!

I'll be back in 2022! :D

Thank you for all your support, it means a lot!

As always, I hope you have a great day/night! ❤️❤️❤️❤️

-idontknowwhatimdoinghalfthetime!

# Anger: An Ally. An Enemy.

## Chapter Notes

I'm baaccckk~

Wishing an awesome 2022 to everybody! I hope that you all enjoyed the holidays!

Yunmeng Bros Confrontation: Part Two

Strap in for a glimpse into Jiang Cheng's thoughts. He has 8 pages worth of them. Enjoy!

~~~~~

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

Jiang Cheng knows that his- that Wei Wuxian has changed. For one, he's no longer six feet tall, his frame is slender, and his facial features are soft instead of sharp. Wuxian has always been on the thinner side, but his previous body was lean and muscular; this one is more elegant and slim. Also, his hair slightly curls near the ends in contrast to the straight raven hair he used to have; and although others might not have noticed, Wuxian's smile is... different. Even when he's laughing hard enough to make his body tremble, his grin and even laugh aren't how they used to be. Wanyin doesn't know how to explain it, but he knows he's right.

At first, he thought the subtle changes he saw in the other were due to the new body he gained, but Wanyin's starting to doubt that theory. For one, although Wuxian looks and sounds different, the man is undoubtedly who he claims to be. The way he stands, the way he gestures when speaking, the way his facial muscles spasm when angry, amused, or calculating. They're the same ones Wanyin grew up seeing in his... In the demonic cultivator. He stills rubs the tip of his nose when he's in deep thought or puzzled over something, his nostrils still flare when he's annoyed, and he will most likely always revert to humour when wanting to evade subjects pertaining to himself that he doesn't wish to speak on.

In so many ways, he's the Wei Wuxian Jiang Cheng remembers. But in other ways, he isn't. For instance, he's more...closed off? Despite how he would hold himself, Wuxian has never been as open as he appears to be. Yes, growing up, he was friendly and outgoing, making friends with anyone and everyone he'd meet; but he'd hold himself back in a way. It wasn't that he was quieter when with others, but more like he wasn't as...transparent. Wanyin used to be able to tell what Wuxian's mood or thoughts about others were simply by his body language.

But now, Wuxian is still.

It's unnerving, actually. The old Wuxian couldn't sit without fidgeting, but now it seems like his time in the Cloud Recesses has paid off. However, it may be due to the circumstances they've been placed in that's made him this way.

Wuxian's default reaction to situations that would metaphorically or literally corner him was to either "play dead" in a sense or to attack. The "play dead" stance was one where he'd give nothing away; that way, enemies wouldn't be able to use anything against him. His body language would reveal nothing; his smile would be his shield.

Only recently, Wanyin has come to the morbid discovery that Wuxian's shield was up way more often than he had previously thought. He still has yet to truly absorb everything that he's come to learn about the black and red-robed cultivator, but something tells him that whatever more there is to see, it won't be pleasant.

Now that Wanyin has been given the time to observe and somewhat contemplate the other, he's positive that Wuxian is using the "play dead" card. Wuxian's mindset is most likely of the notion that it's safer to make it seem like the viewings everyone has seen hardly affect him.

*'If that's the case, then perhaps Wei Wuxian hasn't really changed at all.'*

Except for his smile and laugh. Wanyin can't put his finger on it, but those are different in a way that's bothering him. Although the last couple of hours hadn't given him much time to study a smiley and happy Wei Wuxian, he couldn't help but notice it. If things were different, maybe he'd ask the demonic cultivator about it.

*'Hell, if I'm entertaining impossible situations, maybe if things were different, I'd ask the oh-so-venerable Hanguang-Jun for his opinion.'*

He'd snort at the thought if reality weren't so mirthless.

Here he is, literally locked in a room with the man he used to call brother and best friend so that they can undergo a forced reconciliation. He'd be angry if the contrast between them now compared to when they were younger weren't so painfully obvious. Especially after the last viewing they saw.

The thing is, Wanyin secretly doesn't mind the concept of the whole "get-along room" situation he's in; the issue is that he doesn't know how to get to the reconciliation part. He's never been one to shy away from sharing his thoughts, especially when it's speaking up about general idiocy. Anger has always been the easiest emotion to use to his advantage. But he knows that if he wants Wei Wuxian back, if he wants the brotherhood he once had, his temper is only going to make it worse.

For Wuxian, his smile is a shield. For Wanyin, it's a scowl.

It's been 16 years, and over that time, Jiang Cheng likes to think that he's matured. He stopped being a kid the day his parent's died, but the young adult he had grown into was one of grief, fury, and revenge. He had a love for his family and followers of the Jiang Sect, but it was hidden away under the fierce and somewhat cold-heartedness given to him by his mother; and the inability to speak on topics that mattered most, which was passed down to him by his father.

The death of the rest of his family resulted in him becoming an empty husk, but raising Jin Ling brought light into his life. He'll never be a father to the boy, but being his guardian has made him into a respectable Sect leader and a man he'd like to think his parents and A-Jie would be proud of. He had to learn to reign in his anger when giving his nephew an upbringing that both Jiejie and Jin Zixuan would've wanted, and he had succeeded in doing so. Or at least he thought he had before Wei Wuxian came back from the dead.

When he had learned that the demonic cultivator had returned, all common sense had flown out the window. He said and did things that he's not proud of, but in his defence, he hadn't allowed himself to have any form of closure when it came to Wuxian's death. He hardly allowed himself to think of the other during those thirteen years. When he did, it resulted in an overwhelming mix of emotions that would leave him mentally and physically debilitated.

Two years ago, when he first came to the realization that the man in front of him was his dead former sworn-brother, those emotions were merged into a single reaction: A blind all-encompassing rage.

Anger has always been his greatest strength and greatest flaw. His temper has made it so that no other Sect leader has attempted to bullshit him into anything. They know they can't swindle deals out of him or bully him into agreements. Because of this, the people who follow him are loyal, and his Sect has thrived. But, on the other hand, it has led to the loss of all those he ever held dear, whether it was on purpose or not.

~~To this day, he still doesn't have a right-hand man. That spot has subconsciously been left open for the one person that was meant to fill it. Even if he decides to never come back.~~

His anger is a weapon and a hindrance, one that he has carried with him since he was young. It was derived from his mother and fortified throughout the years.

He was mad at other kids for having parents that were proud of them and didn't fight all the time.

He was mad at other siblings that were allowed the freedom of openly caring for one another, never having to fear that speaking out would lead them to undergo painful punishments.

He was mad at his father for never praising him as he would Wuxian.

He was mad at his mother for always blaming Wuxian for everything.

He was mad at both his mother and father for never appreciating Jiejie.

He was mad at himself for never standing up against his parents when it was needed.

He was mad at the Wen's when they destroyed his home.

He was mad at the Wen's when they took Wuxian away from him and A-Jie to live in the Burial Mounds.

He was mad at the Peacock for taking Jijie away.

He was mad that he had to shoulder the burden of rebuilding, re-strengthening, and leading a Sect by himself at the age of 17.

He was mad that his brother wouldn't come home.

He was mad that his brother-in-law died.

He was mad that his sister died.

He was mad that one of those deaths was his brother's fault.

He was mad at himself for not being able to save a single member of his family.

He was mad that Jin Ling would never taste his mother's soup. Would never learn the master archery skills of his father. Would never meet his grandparents. And would never learn the art of having fun with the help of his Dajiu.

He was mad that his nephew was an orphan.

He was mad that he was now truly alone, forced to shoulder everything on his own.

And then the anger simmered down.

And then Wuxian came back.

And the anger was all Wanyin allowed himself to feel.

He was mad that the other dared to return after all the anguish and pain he had left in his wake.

He was mad that one of the first things Wuxian did when back in the land of the living was to summon the monster that killed Jin Zixuan.

He was mad that the beast had escaped and almost hurt his nephew.

He was mad that this was also his former brother's fault.

He was mad that Hanguang-Jun placed himself in business that didn't concern him.

He was mad that Wuxian was able to come back, but Jijie wasn't.

He was mad that the happy family Jin Ling could've had was stripped away by the demonic cultivator.

He was mad that after everything, Wuxian still hadn't apologized.

He was mad that after everything, seeing the man that led to the death of his sister and brother-in-law made him inexplicably happy.

He was mad that after everything, he had sorely missed the other.



He was mad that after everything that happened in the Guanyin Temple, Wuxian still chose not to come home.

He was mad that Wuxian chose Hanguang-Jun.

He was mad that Wuxian was walking away from him again.

He was mad at himself because he knew it was his fault.

He was mad at himself for blaming everything on Wuxian, both in his previous life and his new one.

He was mad that Wuxian didn't *want* to come home.

He was mad that Wuxian hadn't told him about his Golden Core.

He was mad that *he* wanted Wuxian to come home.

He was mad that Wuxian had allowed Jiang Cheng to believe all the lies the cultivation world had made about him.

He was mad that he *allowed himself* to believe all the lies the cultivation world had made about the man he has secretly never stopped considering a brother.

He was mad because if he felt anything other than anger, he would fall apart.

And now he's in a situation where he wants to allow himself to be angry, to let rage consume him, but he can't. Well, in actuality, that's a lie. There's always a thrum of anger under his skin, one that he won't ever be able to let go of.

Life hasn't dealt him the greatest hand, and it seems anger was the only thing he was allowed to keep. He couldn't keep his home or his family, so he's come to terms with the fact that this always-present fury will stay with him forever. He hides behind anger because it's much easier to be angry at someone than to tell them you're hurt.

He now understands his mother.

He knows that anger won't help the situation. He *knows* this, but nevertheless, he's still angry. At the moment, it's because he's currently in a position where he could possibly have his lost brother back, but all he's able to feel is fear.

He's absolutely *terrified* of screwing this up.







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***27 YEARS AGO***

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*Jiang Cheng snuffles and angrily wipes away his tears.*

*‘Having friends is stupid. Who needs them anyway? I don’t!’*

*Despite his 12-year-old thoughts, tears continuously stream down his face as his body shakes with each hitch of his breath.*

*He hadn't intended to be mean; it's just that he didn't know what to say to the compliment he received. He thought that those kids were making fun of his sword skills! He's not used to others praising him when he trains.*

*'Father had thought it was satisfactory, and A-Niang simply scoffed. So how was I supposed to know that the kids that saw me practice were being genuine?'*

*He had expected them to laugh and run away after jesting or perhaps to scowl at him after he snapped at them to go away. But instead, they got even angrier than he did and started yelling at him.*

*He tries to muffle the noises he's making as he sobs.*

*'I know that I get unreasonably angry and that snapping wasn't a respectful thing to do like A-Jie says. But- but A-Jie needs to understand that after calling me names, they deserved it! And telling me that I'll be alone forever because no one wants to be my friend? How could they not expect that I'd strike back after saying such things?!'*

*A voice in the back of his head echoes the thought that hasn't left him alone since the confrontation:*

*What if they're right?*

*Jiang Cheng tightens his arms around his knees and hides his face away from the stupid world.*

*"A-Cheng? There you are!"*

*Jiang Cheng looks up to see Wei Ying. The other boy has a split lip and dark bruising around his eye, and yet he wears a bright smile despite his injuries.*

*“What happened to your face?” Asks the sect heir.*

*A-Ying raises an eyebrow and sits down beside him.*

*“I could ask you the same thing.”*

*With a scowl, Jiang Cheng wipes away the frustrating tears, but he knows that there's still apparent evidence that he's been crying.*

*He looks over the other boy questioningly, noticing his bruised and cut-up knuckles.*

*He blinks. Did- Did his brother...?*

*“Did you get into a fight?”*

*Wuxian smiles sheepishly as he leans back against one of the large boulders surrounding the two 12-year-olds. This cluster of large rocks and boulders is a perfect place to hide away from prying eyes. A-Cheng likes to run away to this spot when he wants to be alone. He thought that he was the only one that knew of it, but Wei Ying found him, as usual.*

*Wei Ying always finds him.*

*He'll deny it every time, but it's nice to have someone that comes looking for him when they realize he's gone. Father and mother never did, and A-Jie tires herself quickly so she doesn't look for too long, knowing that he'll eventually come back.*

*“You never get in fights. What happened? Who do I have to beat up?!”*

*Wei Ying snorts.*



*“What’s so funny?”*

*“It’s just that I thought the same thing.”*

*“Thought what?”*

*“Who do I have to beat up.”*

*“What the hell are you talking about, A-Ying?”*

*His brother turns to him, his expression uncharacteristically serious.*

*“No one, and I mean no one, hurts my Shidi and get’s away with it.”*

*Things start to click into place. Jiang Cheng sits up out of his crouched position and looks at Wei Ying with wide eyes.*

*“You...How did you know?”*

*A-Ying smiles.*

*“I’m your Shixiong, that’s how. I know everything!”*

*A-Cheng rolls his eyes but can’t stop his wide smile.*

*“You shouldn’t have fought them. A-Niang is going to be mad while A-Die and A-Jie will be disappointed.”*

*His brows furrow in confusion.*

*“Did you actually go up to them and just start throwing punches?”*

*“I wanted to,” divulges the other with a shrug. “But Shijie wouldn’t be happy with me if I did that.”*

*His expression darkens.*

*“However, when they told me the stuff they said to you while laughing, they really should’ve seen the fists coming.”*

*He looks A-Cheng in the eyes, making sure that he has the tear-stained boy’s full attention.*

*“You know everything they said was complete bullshit, right?”*

*The invisible weight on the sect heirs shoulders disappears as he nods.*

*A-Ying’s expression lightens.*

*“Good. They don’t even know you, so screw them! Plus, you not scowling all the time would just be weird. I would be genuinely freaked out if you started walking around with a wide smile 24/7.”*

*A-Cheng punches the giggling boy’s shoulder with an amused huff and a bright grin.*

*He was right all along; he doesn't need stupid friends.*

*All he needs is his brother.*

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## Chapter End Notes

I think I did pretty good with this chapter, what do you guys think?

Also: I have officially decided that I will post two chapters per month. I hope that sounds good for y'all. :D

As always: Keep! The! Comments! Coming! They make my day! So do reviews!!!

Also, if you want, share theories on what you think will happen next!

I hope you have a great day/night! 💙💙💙

# Tears And...Possession?

## Chapter Notes

### Yunmeng Bros Confrontation: Part 3

I give you cuddles, whump, soft JC and confused WWX tied up with a nice Yunmeng Bros reconciliation bow. Enjoy!

~~~~~

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

To Jiang Cheng's complete and utter surprise, he doesn't think he's screwed this up... *yet*. Yes, Wuxian is currently crying, which is worrying in itself since he *never* cries. Or at least it was extremely rare to see when they were growing up.

But he's crying.

While they're...hugging.

Which is something that *Jiang Cheng* initiated.

After yelling.

A lot.

He's as confused as the next person, but Wuxian has never made much sense anyway, so, just as he used to do when they were kids, Jiang Cheng decides to simply roll with it. It's something he should've done sixteen years ago when Wuxian needed him most. To trust the other and follow along with whatever he had planned. That is, *if* he had anything planned.

Did Wuxian know that the Cultivation world was becoming more aggressive as time went on while he was in the Burial Mounds with the Wen's? Did he see it coming? Or was he blindsided?

There had been rumours that the demonic cultivator was creating a Sect of his own. Personally, Wanyin never believed that the other would create a Clan to overthrow the cultivation world. But, do not be mistaken; Sandu Sengshou has seen the kind of cruelty and power the Yiling Patriarch is capable of. He does not doubt that if the demonic cultivator had wanted to, he could've been relatively successful in gaining control over all Sects. Especially right after the Sunshot Campaign.

But he's also seen the Demon Patriarch do the stupidest shit when they were teenagers, so he's never feared the other. But he had wondered whether or not Wuxian had thought of following that route. Not one of world domination, but that of becoming the leader of his own Sect.

He had been an exemplary Head Cultivator, despite Yu Furen's complaints. And he had a way of seamlessly gaining the loyalty of others. Perhaps Wuxian had entertained the idea, but Jin Guangyao's plan's had come to play and interrupted the demonic cultivator's steps in undergoing such an endeavour. Jiang Cheng could probably ask Wei Wuxian, but he doesn't think that would be appropriate for their current predicament.

Wanyin can't help but notice how much shorter the other is. The Jiang Sect leader is a good 6 feet tall, while the trembling frame in his arms is 5'8 at the most. If it's weird for him, how must it feel for Wuxian? Him having been forced into a body so unlike his own, without any freedom of choice. It might be cowardly, but Jiang Cheng doesn't want to think about it.

He's also trying not to let the quiet yet distressed noises coming from the smaller cultivator affect him too much. He tightens his hold and pretends that the tears cascading down his own cheeks are nonexistent. He's never known what to do in such situations. The only instances he's had to undergo something similar was when he had to soothe a young and upset Jin Ling.

When they were younger, Wanyin was never the one to comfort Wuxian when crying. He was always cared for by the other when in tears. And if Wuxian was ever sad, A-Jie would look after him.

*'I'm going to do better, Jiejie. I swear. I'll start with this and pray that you guide Wuxian and I like you used to.'*

Wanyin mentally crosses his fingers and does what he knows works, or at least what he knows used to work for Jin Ling. He backs up without relinquishing the embrace and slides to the cave floor, back leaning against the wall with Wuxian between his legs.

The shorter male, perhaps unknowingly, clutches tightly to the front of Jiang Cheng's robes, his face hidden against Wanyin's chest as his body shakes with each quiet sob. The sect leader rests his cheek against the top of the demonic cultivator's head and rubs his back with his right hand; his left hand pulls the younger man closer.

Wuxian freezes.

*'Fuck. Shit. Did I do something wrong? Jin Ling would calm down faster with backrubs. Was I not supposed to do that? I don't know what the fuck I'm doing!'*

Wuxian snuggl-

He actually. *Fucking. Snuggles.* Closer.

And then cries even harder.

*'Fuck! Fuck! Fuck! Shit! What would A-Jie do? What the hell would she do?!'*

He knows what she would do. And so, with the knowledge that she's never let him down before, Wanyin trusts in his sisters actions of the past and tightens his hold on his brother while continuing the previous relaxing movements; rocking slightly from side to side.

*'If only Jiejie could see us now. I doubt even she'd believe her eyes.'*

All those years ago, after thinking him dead for three months, the first thing Wanyin had done when he found his brother again was pull him into a firm hug. When Wuxian had come back 13 years after *truly* dying, a part of Wanyin that was buried under layers of anger had desperately desired to do what his younger self had wanted, yet failed to accomplish: Hug his brother and never let him out of his sight again.

Wanyin has never been one to indulge himself in sentimental actions such as that, except when it came to Jin Ling when he was a toddler.

Even as a young boy, Jiang Cheng would never initiate hugs or ask for them. A-Jie and Wuxian would always do such things; Wanyin would simply pretend to be annoyed by it, yet do nothing to stop them. That was their dynamic.

Until it wasn't.

A-Jie isn't here anymore, and Wuxian wouldn't have dared touch him, their relationship much too damaged for such bold actions. Which meant that Wanyin had to take the first step.

Which he did.

And he can't say he regrets it; it's probably the best decision he's made in the past two years concerning the demonic cultivator.

He cautiously allows himself a sliver of hope that this might be a step in the right direction.

That he might truly get his brother back.

Wuxian, on the other hand, honestly has no idea why he's crying.

At first, he thought that it might've been relief. That he burst into tears because he was so overwhelmed by the fact that what he'd hoped for but never thought possible had come true: Jiang Cheng wants to be brothers again!

Now that he thinks about it, that might be the case, actually.

But he didn't think that such a situation would call for *this* much crying. It has been brought to Wuxian's attention that although he is immeasurably relieved and honestly *happy*, he's also been blindsided. Without warning, he was hit with a suffocating wave of grief that is currently attempting to ransack his feelings of happiness.

He had expected the joy but was unprepared for the oppressive *pain*.

He's crying for the brotherhood they once had, which was shattered *because of him*.

He's crying because the distance between the man he was once openly allowed to call brother was created *because of him*.

He's crying because he never even dared to dream that Jiang Cheng could ever treat him with anything more than hostility.

And yet, here they are.

After hearing the angry and then dejected yet hopeful words of the Sect leader, Wuxian was hit with a mix of hope, fear, longing, disbelief, and uncertainty. But once he was *pulled into a hug*, all he felt was relief and happiness.

And then the bittersweetness hit.



And the tears came.

And they have yet. To fucking. Stop.

Emotions are annoying as hell.

Oh, and also, he's pretty sure that Jiang Cheng has been possessed.

The man not only *initiated* a hug, but he's currently comforting Wuxian and doing a surprisingly good job at it. In all the lives he's lived, he'd never have pegged Wanyin as a cuddler. He'd question its absurdity with more attentiveness if he wasn't crying so fucking much.

It only gets worse once Jiang Cheng starts rubbing his back like Shij- like Jiang Yanli used to. Similar to normal backrubs, she would perform the upward and downwards motion. But she would then transition to circular motions and move on to other shapes afterward.

Jiang Cheng remembering and employing such specific actions makes the tears proceed with a vengeance. But what really opens the floodgates, in a manner of speaking, is the fact that the Jiang Sect leader is resting his cheek upon Wuxian's head as if he's prepared to remain in such a position for an indefinite amount of time.

It's such a small and somewhat insignificant gesture, and yet it both mends and cracks the demonic cultivator's heart.

And then Jiang Cheng starts rocking them side to side like Jiang Yanli used to do after a night of nightmares.

The infamous Demon Patriarch sobs like a baby.

Wanyin pulls him impossibly closer.

Wuxian holds on tight and decides that, unlike his previous life, he won't push his brother away this time.

---

**AN UNDEFINED AMOUNT OF TIME LATER**

---

Wuxian hiccups against Wanyin's shirt as he tries to catch his breath. While the sobs have ceased, the shorter of the two continues to tremble. Full-body stutters wrack the other here and there, indicating that he's still crying. Jiang Cheng is starting to worry. If Wuxi-

*'Fuck it. We're stuck in this room for a reason.'*

If *his brother* continues on like this, he will get dehydrated, which will lead to a boatload of symptoms that are ultimately not great. He had to learn that the hard way with a poor 7-year-old Jin Ling. It's not one of his proudest moments.

*'Soothing first. Water second. Reminiscing scheduled for a later date. Get your shit together, Wanyin.'*

Actually, reminiscing might lead to a solution... When Jin Ling was little, all Jiang Cheng had to do to get him to stop crying was pick him up and walk around with the toddler in his arms. Of course, that tactic can't be implemented in this situation. But maybe tactics of much longer ago could!

With a deep breath and a quiet prayer to his sister, Wanyin does something he hasn't done since he was 12.

"...A-Ying?"

Wuxian goes rigid in Wanyin's arms, and the Sect leader tries hard not to internally panic because damn it! If this is what ruins his chance at having his brother back, then he'll fucking-

Wuxian wriggles a bit until he can lean back and look up at the purple-robed cultivator. The tip of his nose is red, and his cheeks are blotchy. His mouth hangs open in an astonished 'o' shape, and his raised eyebrows accompanied by his wide and slightly puffy eyes make him look... Well, young.

He looks so small and vulnerable. Wanyin feels a wave of intangible anger towards the world for never giving the young man a break. Even after repenting for his sins with his own death, he still suffers. Jiang Cheng knows that he's just as guilty as the rest of the cultivation world. But unlike them, he's going to do right by A-Ying this time around. That is if he's given the privilege.

The black and red-robed cultivator blinks.

And his expression changes.

*'Ah,' thinks Wanyin, 'so that's why his smile and laugh bothered me so much. He was restraining himself.'*

The smile Jiang Cheng is currently being subjected to is small and shaky but indescribably bright and entirely real.

There's the Wei Wuxian he remembers.

And then his brother does what he does best.

He raises a single eyebrow, tilts his head slightly to the side, and smirks.

"Yes, Chengcheng?"

## Chapter End Notes

I know it's short but I just HAD TO stop here. I felt like it was just \*chef's kiss\*. But that's my personal opinion.

Also, I know it might be highly unrealistic, but I needed the reconciliation to be more or less fast-paced because if we want a long-overdue WWX protection squad for the next chapters, we need our Twin Prides back. Am I right? I'm pretty sure I'm right. 😊

In other words, please accept my excuse for making Jiang Cheng OOC. 😊 I apologize if he's too OOC.

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I am terrible at descriptions, so if you need a visual aid, this is how they're sitting:

[https://media.istockphoto.com/photos/shoulder-to-cry-on-picture-id169993064?k=20&m=169993064&s=612x612&w=0&h=W1nf\\_MjGYcHBRLze0X7QPrusp\\_FLvzpRqSvIfPFtUzQ=](https://media.istockphoto.com/photos/shoulder-to-cry-on-picture-id169993064?k=20&m=169993064&s=612x612&w=0&h=W1nf_MjGYcHBRLze0X7QPrusp_FLvzpRqSvIfPFtUzQ=)

Let me know your thoughts on the chapter! I live for comments! And reviews!!!

Also, if you want, share theories on what you think will happen next!

I hope you have a great day/night! ❤️❤️❤️

# Reconciliation: To Forgive And Regain What Once Was Lost

## Chapter Notes

Some angst here and there, accompanied by a healthy amount of brotherly banter to end this Yunmeng Bros Confrontation Arc. :D

(This chap. gives very crack/humour vibes. Why you may ask? Because I felt like it. 😊)

**ALSO:** Read the endnotes, everybody! There's some important stuff I need y'all to do! :D

PS: Since midterms are this month, there's a chance that this will be the only update for the month, sorry. 😞

~~~~~

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

Wanyin nods to himself while looking resigned, dejected, and unimpressed all in one.

"Yup, seems about right."

"Huh?"

"It doesn't matter how many years go by or how different you look; you'll always be the same little shit."

Wuxian's smile widens.

God, he never thought he'd get to do this again. Be able to joke around with Jiang Cheng, no anger, no hatred, no unfathomable blanket of guilt and grief coated over them.

It's incredible.

It might be a day late, but this is the best belated birthday gift he could ever receive! Even if it doesn't last long, even if in the next few minutes Jiang Cheng suddenly remembers all the reasons why Wuxian doesn't deserve even a sliver of his kindness, at least he'll have been allowed this one wonderful moment.

Wuxian shrugs with a shit-eating grin.

"It's a talent."

"You sure it's not a birth defect?"

"I mean, A-Yuan turned out fine, didn't he?"

Jiang Cheng opens his mouth and then closes it, blinking in absolute bewilderment.

"He's... But I thought- you and... What?!"

Wuxian can't hold it in anymore and bursts out laughing. He disentangles himself from the taller man and helps him up, practically wheezing.

"Your face was priceless, I- Gods, I should've painted it!"

"Oh, shut up," mumbles Wanyin with a heatless glare.

They fall into a surprisingly comfortable silence as they take a moment to organize themselves. Or, in Wuxian's case, erase any evidence of having undergone an impromptu breakdown.

After adjusting back to his version of normal, Wuxian notices that the door hasn't reappeared to let them rejoin his husband and the others.

"It seems we're still on a time-out...for some reason," he announces.

Without waiting for a response, he places his hand upon the wall where the rest of the group vanished. Closing his eyes, he centers himself and reaches out for any anomalies of resentful energy that he can use to manipulate the door into moving. Other than the low and ever-present hum of the Burial Mounds, there's nothing available...Odd.

*'Suibian and Chenqing must've convinced Lan Zhan and A-Ning that they don't need to come to my rescue...I honestly don't know how to feel about that.'*

"Hey, uh, A-Ch—"

Wuxian quickly holds his tongue.

*'Is it truly okay to call him so familiarly? I only ever did when we were younger, but that was before either of us had received our courtesy names. Etiquette and social norms decree that for a servant to call someone, especially a Sect Leader, so intimately is disrespectful. Sure, we've hugged it out, but that doesn't necessarily mean that Jiang Cheng considers me family.'*

Not that Wuxian will complain. Being on friendly terms is much more than he could've ever hoped for. It's just that he no longer knows what lines he is or isn't allowed to cross. He learned his lesson from his past life: Whenever he tries to fix things, they only ever worsen. So it's best that Wanyin sets the pace for the mending of their relationship.

The Jiang Sect leader's throat-clearing jolts Wuxian out of his thoughts.

"Did you need something, A-Ying?"

*'Oh. Huh. Guess we're uh, guess we're sticking with that then.'*

Wuxian holds down a goofy overjoyed smile in favour of asking the taller man if he could use Zidian to break the door down.

"My meridians have been sealed. Can't you open it?"

"No, Chenqing...did something. Or she somehow got the Burial Mounds to help her out, which means that it's playing favourites. It didn't give me a straight answer the last time I asked it if it was responsible for this spontaneous cultivation world meet-up."

Jiang Cheng blinks.

"It's unbelievably rude, but you know how evil entities can be," shrugs Wuxian.

The Sect Leader takes a deep breath and sits down on one of the empty chairs at their shared table.

"About that. You have some explaining to do."

*'Uh, oh. The hug couldn't have been it? Must we really talk now?'*

Wei Wuxian has always been considered a chatty individual. As a young Lan Zhan had found out all those years ago, there is usually no such thing as silence when Wuxian is in the room. He's a talkative person, always has been. But ever since returning to the land of the living, Wuxian has been trying his hardest to fix that. Especially now that he lives in the Cloud Recesses.

If people ever truly paid attention, they would realize that when Wuxian talks, it's never about anything of true importance. He never has. Anytime he did, he'd fuck it up. His attempts at speaking up for the Dafan Wens are example enough.



The Head Disciple Wei Wuxian would speak, but never about anything of substance.

When the recently escaped survivor of the Burial Mounds, the Yiling Patriarch, spoke, it was only ever to offer excuses or threats.

The Wuxian of today jokes around, offers Laoshi-level advice and praises his loving husband with heartfelt words and tender actions.

However, no version of himself has ever been able to word their thoughts in a manner that carries their point across to listeners. Anytime he attempted to do so, the message would distort itself into hurt and misunderstandings that only ever made things worse.

Therefore, he evades and deflects. It's probably the only thing he does with utter perfection, which makes sense since he's been doing it since he was a child.

In other words, Jiang Cheng's wish to "sit down and talk" is giving Wuxian metaphorical hives. He's noticed that it's kind of hard to avoid "important" conversations in an enclosed space. Chenqing and Suibian obviously realized that, them being the little shits they are.

"A-Ying, come sit."

It's more of an order than a question, but at least it was asked gently, a very contrasting tone to what Sandu Senghsou usually uses.

With a resigned huff, the Demonic Cultivator sits beside the Sect Leader.

Jiang Cheng takes another deep breath while Wuxian holds his own.

"Question number one," calmly states Jiang-Zongzhu before he throws any semblance of serenity out the window. "The Burial Mounds are *alive*?! You can talk to it?! Since *fucking* when?!"

Wuxian blinks in surprise. This is not the way he thought this conversation was going to go. He rubs his nose in thought before providing a response.

"Well, technically, I've been able to hear it clearly since I created the Stygian Tiger Seal."

"Technically!?"

"Mhmm!" Nods Wuxian unperturbed. "I only ever heard a contortion of its voice during the war and my... 3-month disappearance. But once the Seal was forged, its voice was much more comprehensive."

"...Contortion of its voice?"

"Have you become a parrot all of a sudden? I don't understand why any of this is important, Jiang Cheng."

Wanyin sighs and rubs his temple.

"Look, I have no idea what the fuck I'm doing when it comes to us."

Wuxian tenses while Jiang Cheng sits up straight, face serious but tone innocently hopeful.

"But I *do* know that I want this to work. Perhaps not the way it used to be...but better? I... I'd like to think it would make A-Jie proud."

The shorter male slumps a bit in his seat and offers a nod accompanied by a small smile.

Wanyin nods back, this time in self-assurance and determination.

"Then to do that, we need to...well, communicate. I know we're both shit at it, but it's worth a try... No secrets?"

Wuxian grins. "No secrets."

His grin then turns into a smirk, as it usually does.

"My-oh-my, ChengCheng, when did you become so wise?"

Jiang Cheng offers a smirk of his own.

*'Uh oh.'*

"I am wise now, aren't I? You know what else I am?"

"...Still afraid of marital prospects seeing as you're still single?"

"I'd like to remind you that although you're under Hanguang-Jun's protection, he's not here right now," threatens Wanyin.

"I thought you said your meridians have been sealed."

"That won't stop me from breaking your legs."

Wuxian uncaringly waves away the Sect Leader's threat.

"Yes, yes, of course. What else are you, Jiang Cheng?"

The smirk returns.

"Your senior."

Wuxian blinks.

"Which technically makes me *your* gege."

Wuxian *does not* like where this is going.

"Such a title demands a higher respect from you, *little brother*. "

It's official, Jiang Cheng is most definitely possessed. Wuxian needs to stop this, as in yesterday.

"I would also like to mention that some idolized prostration here and there for your older brother is highly recommended."

The Demonic Cultivator is being subjected to Wanyin's own shit-eating grin, and he has never felt more traumatized *in his life*.

"No. Nope. Nuh-uh. Absolutely not."

"You don't have a say in this, didi."

"Please stop."

"You either call me A-Cheng or gege. Addressing me in any other way is unacceptable."

"I'm still your Shixiong!"

Wuxian freezes.

*'No, you're not. You're whatever he allows you to be to him. After everything you've —'*

"I'm 13 years older than you. You can't ignore the facts."

*'He's... not mad about the comment I just made?'*

Having to experience the many ways Hanguang-Jun had changed when Wuxian came back to life was dumbfounding, but this is downright unfair. Wuxian will not let this stand!

"Even if that may be, your doing the whole older brother thing wrong! I never made you undergo 'idolized prostration'!"

"That was no one's fault but your own."

"You can't actually be serious!"

Wanyin lifts a single eyebrow, smirk never once leaving his stupid face. Wuxian shakes his head.

"You can't make me agree to this."

"This...?"

Wuxian throws his arms in the air in frustration and reluctant defeat.

"You *cannot* make me agree to this, *A-Cheng*."

"You were an annoying, stubborn-ass of an older brother, so now it's my turn."

"Well, then that simply means that it's my job to be an even more annoying younger bro-"

"HAH! You admit it!"

Wuxian stands from his seat.

"If you need me, I'll be over there attempting to create an explosive talisman so that I can blow that door down and be as far away from you as physically possible," he explains stiffly.

He is definitely not pouting, that's for sure.

Jiang Cheng snorts and pulls Wuxian back onto his chair.

"Sit your ass down, A-Ying; I still have more questions."

"So this talk has now turned into an interrogation?"

"Exactly."

*'Oh boy...'*

Wanyin suddenly turns sombre, leaving Wuxian on high alert. He's most definitely not going to enjoy the line of questioning A-Cheng has thought up. Maybe it's not too late to find a way back to joking and bantering about?

"Your parents, A-Ying."

Wuxian tenses, hands instinctively curling into fists in an attempt to stop any possible shaking.

"Why didn't you tell Jiejie and me about what truly happened?"

The black and red-robed cultivator sighs.

"As I told Lan Zhan, this happened a long time ago. So what does it matter now?"

"It matters because it's something A-Jie and I should've known!"

"And what would that have done? Neither of you would've been able to change it. And either way, both of you protected me from dogs throughout our childhood without complaint. There was nothing more I needed from you in that aspect."

"Fine," grounds out the taller man. "Then explain the Yunmeng disciples who used you as a *fucking* scapegoat."

Just as he suspected, Wuxian *really* doesn't like this line of questioning.

"...Explain what exactly?"

"Why did you allow such fuckery?! Why the hell didn't you tell me?!?"

"Jiang Cheng, I-"

"Don't you dare make up some bullshit lie."

"...I hadn't *originally* meant for it to go so far. And by the time it got to where you...saw, it would've been too suspicious for me to start blaming everyone else for the misconducts usually said to be caused by myself."

"So you kept suffering out of some fucked-up sense of practicality?!?"

"I don't expect you to understand Jian-"

"Understand? *Understand*?!"

Wanyin stands and begins pacing in front of the Demonic Cultivator.

"There's nothing to understand! It shouldn't have fucking happened!"



Wuxian closes his eyes and pinches the bridge of his nose.

"That we can both agree on. Next question?"

Wanyin looks like he wants to continue interrogating (read: yelling at) Wuxian on the subject but decides to do as the other asks of him.

"In the viewing we were shown before my own, there was a scene where you were hurt during the Sunshot Campaign. Instead of going to the medical wing—"

Wuxian opens his mouth to defend himself, but Wanyin cuts him off before he can continue.

"—*Or* going to see A-Jie so she could patch you up herself, you went to your own tent. Correct?"

Wuxian nods begrudgingly, deciding to remain intelligently quiet. Wanyin continues pacing once more, Wuxian not realizing the other man had stopped.

"As you lay there on the verge of fainting, you allow me to prattle on about how you shouldn't miss that meeting. Yes?"

"... Yes."

"And then *you fucking showed up* at that meeting! The fuck was that about?!!"

"... Was I? Not? Supposed to go to that meeting? I'll be completely honest with you, I can't remember for the life of me what it was about, but—"

Wanyin's pacing comes to an end once again as he turns his full-irritated anger towards Wei Wuxian.

"A-Ying! That's not the fucking point, and you know it!"

"But it is, though! If the meeting was important, then that's why I did what I did!"

"Your self-preservation skills are pissing me off."

"Join the club; Lan Zhan probably couldn't agree more. However- buh, buh, buh! Before you say anything - if it makes you feel any better, he and I are working on it."

Wanyin narrows his eyes. Wuxian rolls his own and places three fingers in the air.

"You can ask Hanguang-Jun himself if you don't believe me!"

The Sect Leader scowls and sits back down with a huff.

"You better be, A-Ying, or *I swear* I'll sick A-Ling on you. And believe you me, he's worse than Jiejie."

Wuxian blinks.

"Are you *worried* about me, ChengCheng?"

Well, *that* wasn't the right thing to ask; Wanyin looks like he's about to self-combust.

"Yes! I fucking am! Is that what you wanted to hear?! We've been given this second chance, and I don't want you dying again due to your lack of survival skills before I can make up for failing you!"

Both men freeze in shock.

Wuxian is taken aback, but brotherly affection quickly replaces his astonishment. Before everything went to hell, being a brother to Jiang Cheng used to be the easiest thing in the world for the smaller man. Even after all these years, it's still so easy to fall back into that role, especially seeing as it's wanted like it used to be.

"You never failed me, A-Cheng," responds Wuxian softly. "The outcomes of the decisions I made were my own. None of it was your fault, and I have never once blamed you for the way things turned out."

"That's nonsense! You and I both know that I could've done more! I-"

"Your hands were tied, A-Cheng, in all sense of the word. If you had tried to shelter the Wens and I, the other Clans would've attacked you. You wouldn't have been able to fight against them, not with Lotus Pier being rebuilt and an immense shortage of disciples."

"But-"

"And even if you did, and the Clans went after Yunmeng Jiang, where would that have put Jiang Yanli? She was married into the den of snakes, and they would've used her against us. That we can both be certain of."

Hesitantly, Wuxian places a hand over Jiang Cheng's clenched one.

"There was nothing either of you could've done, and I came to terms with that a long time ago. You should too."

Wanyin bows his head for a brief moment before violet-grey find greyish silver.

"I will do better by you, A-Ying, I swear," he proclaims, tone solemn but earnest.

Hand remaining clenched, Jiang Cheng lifts his forearm up expectantly. Wuxian grins widely, his own arm instinctively doing the same so he can knock their wrists against one another as they used to when they were children.

"And I, you."

The two offer each other warm smiles before Wuxian gets distracted by the rise in resentful energy he senses.

"What is it?" Asks A-Cheng.

"The door is going to reappear any moment now."

Wuxian then grins mischievously.

"Buuut, I was wondering if you would indulge me in a little...creativity? For old times sake."

Wanyin raises an eyebrow, face remaining impassive but eyes dancing with intrigue.

Wuxian stands from his seat and pointedly looks at the frozen cultivators around them. Then, he walks towards the Yao Clan's table and turns towards his brother.

"You wouldn't happen to have a brush and ink on you, would you?"

Wanyin smirks.

## Chapter End Notes

That ending was suggested by @Voulve, one of my wonderful readers! I hope you liked it! :D

Also, the wrist-knock handshake thing came from this art I saw on Twitter:  
<https://twitter.com/pkchulainn/status/1261322098313531392>

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**NOW FOR THE IMPORTANT STUFF:** I need your help to figure out where I want this fic to go. I'm going to give you 3 options and you have to choose one of them. Now don't worry, I'll be integrating each option within the fic at some point, I just need your help to figure out which one I do first!

Here are the options:

**Option A)** wx + lz romance

**Option B)** wx + the dafan wens

**Option C)** yunmeng siblings

Tell me your choice and leave a comment about your thoughts on the chapter!!!

Also, if you want, share theories on what you think will happen next!

I hope you have a great day/night! 💜💜💜

# We Now Return To Our Regularly Scheduled Programming

## Chapter Notes

Sorry for the mini hiatus everyone! Uni has been kicking my butt 😅 Thankfully, the school year is finished this month! Here's the chapter y'all have been waiting for, enjoy!

~~~~~

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

"Don't be so wimpy, Chengcheng; bolden those lines! That mustache needs to be thicker!"

"Hey! Focus on your own defacements!"

"But I'm finished," whines Wuxian with a pout.

A-Cheng lowers his brush and turns toward his brother, raising an eyebrow in disbelief.  
"Three people only?"

Wuxian grins unabashedly with a shrug and points to each of his victims one by one. "That cultivator spoke badly about my Lan Zhan while my husband wasn't around."

Wanyin rolls his eyes.

"This one wanted to administer corporal punishment upon my A-Yuan for a meagre offence and wouldn't back down until Lan Zhan threatened him." Wuxian sighs wistfully. "My A-Zhan was so intimidating."

The demonic cultivator then gestures toward the frozen man beside him. "And finally, Sect Leader Yao is Sect Leader Yao. I think that's reasoning enough."

Unable to argue with that, Jiang-Zongzhu grunts in agreement. He then refocuses his attention onto his current target. Wuxian gazes towards the four other ink-faced Jin's that have been subjected to Jiang Cheng's creativity.

"I'm guessing they offended A-Ling at some point in their lives?" He asks, amused.

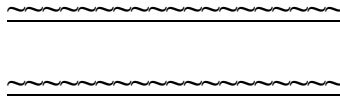
Wanyin nods with a self-satisfied smirk before jerking his chin towards another stationary Jin. "That one's an asshole too."

Not needing to be told twice, Wuxian heads toward his next victim, feeling lighter than he has in a while. He never would've imagined that he'd be able to goof off with A-Cheng like this again. He holds back a giggle at the thought of seeing his Baobei's reaction when he tells him who his partner in crime was for this specific act of human vandalism. Not that Wuxian has practiced such a thing often, although it *was* much more common when he was younger. A-Cheng used to be his accomplice back then, and it warms his heart to see that that hasn't changed despite all that's happened between them.

Wuxian dips the tip of his brush in ink, making sure it doesn't have too much or too little upon its bristles. "I'm thinking he'll look better with a unibrow, don't you?"

The brothers exchange twin smirks, similar to the ones they shared as children not yet burdened by the horrors of the world.

"I couldn't agree more," states Jiang Cheng.



Three defaced cultivators later, the door to the room from which the rest of the group disappeared becomes visible. As they exit, Wuxian can't help but notice the delicious smell accompanying them; his stomach growls instinctively. His heart, however, does a little flip the moment his gaze catches his husband.

The moment Lan Wangji steps back into the open room, his eyes seek out his Wei Ying. Caring not for his surroundings, he goes to him with all the intensity that characterizes the great Hanguang-Jun. He places the plate of food in his hands on their table and gently pulls his Airen into his arms. Wuxian reflexively returns the hug, breathing in the scent of sandalwood that unfailingly provides him with a sense of calm.

Wangji pulls back a bit, wanting to look over the younger male. To outsiders, his expression remains the same, but Wuxian can see the moment his husband realizes that he has shed tears while the other was away. He's pulled back into Lan Zhan's chest with a squeeze. The tense hostility permeating the air is so thick that Wuxian can practically taste it. He can only imagine the glare his Zhang fu is giving Jiang Cheng.

"What. Did. You. Do?"

The Twin Jade's tone of voice is cold and demanding, yet, it somehow carries an undertone of barely repressed anger. For once, Wei Wuxian isn't the only one to notice.

Throughout the cultivation world, it is well known that Hanguang-Jun and Sandu Senhgshou *do not* get along. Unlike how they assumed he and the Yiling Patriarch hated each other during the Sunshot Campaign, the disdain between both Sect heirs has never once held a past of amiability. After the death of the Yiling Patriarch, the stance of their unamicable relationship only worsened.

When in each other's presence, the Jade would turn to ice, and the rage of the other barely restrained itself from boiling over. Surprisingly, however, the bitterness was never witnessed. It was only ever felt by the drop in temperature in any room they entered and the harsh glares sent to one another that could kill.

Those same glares are being witnessed by those surrounding the two at this very moment. The juniors share worried glances while Zewu-Jun sighs in slight exasperation. Wen Ning simply looks uncomfortable, and for once, the demonic and spiritual weapons refrain from intervening. Wei Wuxian, on the other hand, doesn't want there to be a fight.



It seems as if every single time there's ever a conversation amongst his family members regarding himself, there's always yelling, screaming, bitterness, anger, pain, *pain, pain*— . He just wants it to stop.

He spent his past life living through that cycle of animosity caused by his existence. He doesn't want to live a second one similarly. Hell, he's been hiding the treatment he's received from his uncle-in-law and so many others as a *preventative* measure so that it wouldn't happen again! And yet, despite it all, it didn't do a thing. Lan Qiren still yelled at Lan Zhan, and the discussion ended with a sense of bitterness between kin. Wuxian *hates* it. He hates that he's always, *always* the causing source. He refuses for it to occur in this second life, especially now that he and Jiang- he and A-Cheng are repairing their relationship.

He loves his husband, and he's never stopped loving his brother; it would make him so very happy if the two could get along.

"Answer the question," orders Hanguang-Jun.

"Instead of throwing around accusations, why don't you. Use. Your. Words?" Responds Jiang Cheng, voice drenched in ire.

The atmosphere becomes impossibly tenser.

Wuxian wiggles out of his husband's hold, not wanting the argument to progress. Wangji tries to pull him back in, but the younger man isn't having it. Instead, he holds Lan Zhan's hands in his own and looks into the beautiful eyes of his ZhiJi.

"Cí'ài, A-Cheng didn't do anything, I swear! We... Well, we talked. Quite a bit." He tries to muster as much reassurance as possible within his expression and voice. As is so often the way with his Lan Zhan, words aren't always enough; actions or looks can sometimes be what is needed to convince the other of the importance or certainty Wuxian feels about something. He wants—no, *needs*— his Baboei to understand that he and A-Cheng are trying to heal. That they both want to do it for themselves and one another, *together*.

Once he's sure that he has his husband's full attention, he smiles softly. His voice, although solemn, hints at slight excitement he's unable to contain as he tries to encompass the past hour that occurred while his A-Zhan was away.

"Despite what the world, and to be honest, myself, thought," his smile turns into a smirk cocooned in vulnerable softness, "the Twin Prides of Yunmeng are working on making a come-back."

Lan Zhan's eyes widen fractionally before zipping over to rest an analytical gaze over Jiang-Zhongzu. To the surprise of those witnessing the interaction, Sect Leader Jiang takes a deep breath and sheds his angry expression. Unflinchingly, he stares Hanguang-Jun right back, offering him a stoic yet earnest nod of his head. Lan Zhan's expression gives nothing away; he studies the other for a moment more before returning his attention to his Airen.

The married couple seem to have a silent conversation before Lan Wangji lowers his head to presses a tender kiss upon the space between his husband's brows.

"I trust you," he mumbles quietly so only Wuxian can hear, "but I do not trust him. Not yet. He has hurt you in both the late and recent past."

Wuxian opens his mouth to respond, but Lan Zhan forges onward.

"I am not as good a man as you think, Qingren. You have a heart that forgives easily and loves strongly. I do not."

"You love more strongly than anyone I've ever known," disputes Wuxian with a frown.

"Mn, perhaps. But I do not forgive as you do."

Wuxian's frown deepens. "You forgave me for all my past transgressions against you."

Wangji gives his husband a soft look, he doesn't smile, but it's a close thing. "There has never been anything to forgive."

"Lan Zhan—"

"Uhm, what happened to Sect Leader Yao?" Questions Sizhui, unaware of the conversation his parents are having.

Jingyi stifles a laugh as he steps toward one of the frozen Jin's. "Is that-? Is that a drawn-on unibrow?"

"Look!" Adds Zizhen, "this cultivator has whiskers!"

As everyone crowds around the vandalized cultivators, Wuxian glances toward his brother. Surprisingly, Jiang Cheng's eyes are already on him. The demonic cultivator offers the other an apologetic look for his husband's reaction, but the Sect Leader simply shakes his head. The sound of Jin Ling's ruckus laughter reclaims their attention. The young Jin is bent in half, laughing at the sight of another one of his Uncle's victims. Catching A-Cheng's gaze once more, the brothers share pleased smirks.

"You've quite outdone yourselves, I must say." Comments Suibian as he studies the face-painted cultivators. "This might be better than when you got the old lotus seed farmer while he was asleep." He smiles up at the Yunmeng Siblings, chuckling as he continues. "It was truly quite daring, painting his face and then stealing his seeds before deserting the crime scene."

Wangji raises an eyebrow at his husband, who can do nothing but shrug and grin sheepishly. The laughter of the juniors and the soft smile of Lan Xichen bolsters Suibian into continuing.

"We could hear his enraged shouting from miles away, and even though he knew who did it, he had no proof. He gave you both the stink eye anytime you crossed paths for *years* afterwards."

"How is it you know that story?" Questions Jiang Cheng, not unkindly. His face only shows mild curiosity as he ignores the pointed looks his nephew attempts to throw at him. Yes, he wasn't always the uptight Sect Leader and Uncle he is today, but that doesn't mean he needs A-Ling to use that against him. Just because he did such a thing all those years ago doesn't mean it was right.

Not that he regrets it, of course. If you ask him, that old man was much too rigid and needed to let loose; what better way of getting him to do so than by sprucing up his face? Those had been Wuxian's exact words, after all. But, once again, A-Ling doesn't need to know that.

Suibian winks and his smile widens as he provides Jiang-Zhonghsu with a response. "I was there, remember?"

"Wait! Wait! Wait!" Demands Zizhen, "Does that mean whenever Senior Wei had you at his waist, you saw and heard everything he ever did?"

Said demonic cultivator goes saucer-eyed as every embarrassing and compromising memory appears at the forefront of his mind. He places his face in his hands with a groan, missing Suibian's much-too-amused smirk.

The Juniors have found a new source for where to get embarrassing stories of their Wei Laoshi and are thrilled; Wen Ning finds this all quite comical. He's glad the tenseness of before has disappeared and has been replaced by this comfortable and joyful atmosphere. Knowing that Wei-ge and his brother have reconciled and are on the path toward mending their relationship is also quite pleasing. He knows it's something that Wei-Gongzi has wanted ever since he moved into the Burial mounds with Wen-Ning's family. This happiness is something the demonic cultivator deserves, and although the Ghost General is somewhat mistrustful of Jiang-Zhongzu (his past transgressions against his Master are not ones he will forget, no matter how petty that may seem), he won't do anything to jeopardize it.

He still feels quite guilty for doing what he did two years ago: divulging Wei-ge's secret without his consent. He couldn't help but feel as if he was partly to blame for the continued estrangement between the brothers, but at the same time, he doesn't regret doing it. It was a necessary evil, really. Sect leader Jiang needed enlightenment from his ignorance and misplaced resentment; there was no other way for that to occur without doing what he did.

Wen Ning's internal musing comes to a stop as he takes his seat back at the table he shares with those around him. He watches with a subtle smile as Hanguang-Jun pushes a plate full of food in front of Wei-ge.

Wuxian grins widely as he realizes that his plate is filled to the brim with Yunmeng cuisine! Unable to quell his delighted squeal, he digs in with a flourish, only holding back the moans of happiness as kindness towards the little ears at the table. And his Lan Zhan's heart, of course.

Receiving his own plate of food, Jiang Cheng gives a nod of thanks to his nephew. The latter turns to Lan Sizhui in intrigue as the Lan sends an interesting inquiry towards the table Chenqing and Suibian have once again taken up residence.

"Chenqing-guniang\*," he asks, "may I ask if the visual and auditory abilities of the frozen cultivators are functional in their current state?"

"Why enquire for permission if you've already asked the question?" She responds.

Flustered and worried he's offended her, Sizhui attempts to apologize, but she simply laughs, waving away his nervous apology. Her mannerism and laughter convey there are no ill feelings; she is amused by him, that is all. The young Lan can't help but see the resemblance she has with his Baba, her movement and expression quite similar to his.

"Before I answer your question, you may refer to me as Chenqing."

"Calling her guniang makes her feel old," Suibian pipes in with a smile, ignoring the glare he receives from the demonic weapon.

With a roll of her eyes, Chenqing returns her attention to those at the table. "They can only see and hear their surroundings whenever the screen is activated. However, they are still unable to move and lose all senses anew when the screen is off."

That gives the Yunmeng Twins pause as they realize that they'd reached the wrong conclusion earlier. Everyone actually *had* witnessed the last viewing. One that both of them hadn't even wanted their family to see.

However, before either of them can say anything about it, Lan Zixchen speaks up. "Will they remain this way for the continuation of the time we are to spend here?"

"No. As a matter of fact, I believe their time-out should come to an end."

And with that, Chenqing snaps her fingers, and pure chaos erupts.

Those who had been frozen mid-yell finish their sentences; others who had been forcibly immobilized at an awkward angle trip or tumble to the ground, accidentally bringing those around them to the floor as well. The people closest to the exit of the room find an invisible barrier preventing them from exiting, only realizing this as they slam their faces against it. The juniors can't help but notice that the cries of livid outrage from the cultivators who had received makeovers are the loudest of the bunch. Sect Leader Yao is practically screeching in indignation as he swears up a storm, looking at his reflection in a hand mirror given to him by one of his disciples. The quartet tries not to laugh too loudly but is failing at withholding their amusement.

The room is essentially anarchic shouting of confusion, anger, and fear. That last emotion is a profound one that the majority feel, seeing as they have forcefully been shown how easily they can be physically manipulated. Such a frightening notion is only solidified as Chenqing lets out a piercing whistle, one that silences the crowd immediately.

For a moment, those who lived during the time after the Sunshot Campaign assume the Demon Patriarch is about to attack. That spine-racking fear the whistle causes them starkly reminds them of the demonic cultivator's terrifying power. But that thought is shut down as everyone quickly recognizes that it's the human-bodied weapon of mass death and destruction itself that is the cause. That knowledge only makes the situation that much more frightening.

"I've said it one too many times," announces Chenqing with a toneless voice that ignites those in the room to shiver in fright. "Be. Quiet."

As she glares at the crowd, Suibian decides to add to his companion's demand. "I'd be mindful of her words If I were you. An angry Qing is wayyyyy worse than an annoyed one." He says all this with a smile that, for some reason, insights the same reaction as the flute spirits threat.

With the quiet now reinstated, Suibian claps his hands once; in response, plates of food appear at everyone's spots.

"Now, please, won't everyone sit and enjoy a nice meal? It's fresh, hot, and ready!"

Begrudgingly, everyone does as told. Once everyone is seated, Chenqing takes advantage of their tameness. "You've all bared witness to glimpses of situations that occurred in the past, most focused towards our Master. You've seen his end and parts of his beginning, both devastating events that only make up less than a fraction of the pain and unfairness our Master has faced."

Wuxian goes rigid in his seat, remembering why he was planning to make an explosive talisman before getting sidetracked with...well, stuff. Lots of stuff. Not that he regrets it, but still. This reminder is sort of ruining the high he had been experiencing. Then again, it's partially his own fault for letting his guard down. As he knows, good things never last. And if your birth name is Wei Ying, good things only foreshadow the bad. For him, the good is usually just the bad all dressed up, a wolf in sheep's clothing, if you would.

"You've also caught glances of the lives of others, as the first viewing provided. As a result, we've been able to sow doubt within some of you."

Her eyes glint with something sharp as her lips tug up into a smirk that reminds many of the Demon Patriarch during the Sunshot Campaign.

"Good," she purrs.

"You know," comments Suibian, "for a bunch of world-renown cultivators, a lot of you are idiots."

His remark is so unrelated and unexpected that many can't help but balk in surprise and indignation. However, they remain silent, the threat from seconds before still ringing in their minds. Suibian continues with an easy grin.

"You all spit and curse at our Master, calling him a monster and a demon. But, none of you seem to realize that just like any standard bully, you're simply projecting onto our Master the attributes that make up each and every single one of *you* ." His grin disappears as his countenance turns into something the viewers can only describe as unsettling. His tone of voice remains angerless, and yet it gives off a threatening aura, all the same. "As Qing had said before, *you* are the guilty ones, the deplorable ones, the evil demons and monsters."

His eyes harden.

"And it's time we show you exactly what monstrosities *you* have performed."

He takes a moment to allow his words to sink in.

"Let us show you our Master's loyalty; our Master's kindness, our Master's heart," says Chenqing.

"And how you ignored it all, allowing the blindness and fear of your own weakness to control your actions and thoughts," adds Suibian.

"Let us show you who the true monsters really are," they declare in unison.

With that, they clap their hands twice synchronically; the large screen comes to life once again.



## Chapter End Notes

Zhang fu = husband

ZhiJi = soul-mate

Ci'ai = love

Qingren = lover/sweetheart

guniang = young woman

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The votes are in from the last chapter, \*drum roll\* here are the results:

Option A) wwx + lz romance = 4 votes

Option B) wwx + the dafan wens = 29 votes

Option C) yunmeng siblings = 4 votes

OPTION B IS THE WINNERRRRRR!!! So look forward to that for the upcoming chapters :D You're participation and investment in this fic makes me so happy y'all 😊  
🥰, so glad you like the story!!! 💕💕💕

Let me know your thoughts on the chapter! I live for comments!!!! And reviews!!!

Also, if you want, share theories on what you think will happen next!

I hope you have a great day/night! 💕💕💕

# Don't Worry!

Hello beautiful readers!

I know I haven't updated in a while, and I apologize for that. This is just a mini message of reassurance to you all; I am not discontinuing this fic. I've simply been having trouble with the upcoming chapter. I like the song I chose, it's just the writing portion isn't coming to me as easily as previous chapters have.

But that doesn't mean I haven't made some headway with the story!


I've actually chosen and planned out future chapters and songs; I've gotten up to Chapter 30+ chapter-songs outlined!

Another thing that's slowed me down in updating is that I had a google docs document filled with PAGES upon PAGES of outlines for this fic as well as many others. Unfortunately, the email account linked to those documents was shutdown, and so I lost all my notes EXCEPT for the ones related to Music Heals All Forms of Misery. I was able to save those notes, which I'm relieved about, but I lost everything else, which rly pissed and bummed me out :(

Anyway, I'm sorry this isn't an update, but I just wanted to let y'all know that I read your comments and have seen many of you ask when the next chapter will be coming out. I honestly, don't know when that'll be. I'm going to be starting work soon, so I'll only have time to write on weekends which will slow down updates.

I am going to try my hardest to get back on track. If I were to give you a time frame for the next update, I would have to say that it will come, at the latest, in August. The soonest the next update could be is late July.

I'm sorry for taking so long, and I am so grateful for all the love this story has been getting! You're comments make my day and I adore how you all look forward to the continuation of this fic, it makes me very very happy!

Thank you so very much for your patience! As always, I hope you have a great day/night! 



-Idontknowwhatimdoinghalfthetime!

# Loyalty & Self-Destruction Are One And The Same

## Chapter Notes

After an atrociously long time, I have returned. So sorry for the wait 😊

Thank you infinitely for your patience and kind words, y'all are amazing!

I want to thank one of my readers @HaleyStarrfighter for introducing me to Neoni. They're an awesome group and this fic will contain many songs by them :D

Without further ado, here are 18 pages worth of Wuxian being a loyal, self-sacrificing bean!

TW: Blood and violence.

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

**The display begins with one, if not *the* main, war camp of the Sunshot Campaign. It's about four and a half months since Wei Wuxian returned from his 3-month disappearance, and his reputation as the Yiling Laozu has solidified and spread throughout both sides of the war. The soldiers of the Campaign are suspicious and wary of him, while the Wen's are outright terrified.**

**The time of day is almost first-light; the sun rises on the horizon, painting the cluster of tents with yellow, orange and dawn-tinted rose. The camp is quiet; only a few cultivators are awake and alert in case of unprecedented attacks from the enemy. Most of the camp, however, is asleep; during this point in the war, free time for rest is few and far between.**

**The Yiling Patriarch appears, walking throughout the camp, making his way between tents with the intention of heading towards his own. His countenance exudes fatigue and stress; his clothes blend into the shadows of the fabric-based shelters.**

**The sunrise accentuates his sharp jawline and subjectively handsome features while his long hair flutters in the wind, along with his red ribbon. His bangs flutter against his cheekbones and long dark lashes. Silver eyes reflecting the colors of daylight.**

*Even when exhausted, he is beautiful, Lan Zhan can't help but think.*

Some women and men in the crowd can't help but share the same thought. Some are a bit more ashamed of it than others.

A quiet whistle of appreciation echoes against the giant walls of the room. Some are also less secretive about their appreciation than others.

Zizhen and Jingyi snicker, while Jin Ling and Sizhui blush.

Nie Huaisang hides a smug grin behind a fluttering fan.

Others are more concerned over what it is the Yiling Patriarch is doing so early in the morning. From his looks, he hasn't slept, which can only mean he has been up and about all night.

Some find this suspicious. If everyone else is asleep, what is the Yiling Patriarch doing so secretly? Is he up to something malicious? Trying to sabotage the camp and their soldiers, camouflaged in the darkness of night, perhaps?

**Wuxian hides a yawn behind his hand, blinking hard to brush off his tiredness. He really needs to get on making that spell which makes sleeping an option and not a necessity.**

***[ The number of wards I could set up so much faster if only sleep didn't impede the body; it truly is such an inconvenience. ]***

**He muffles another yawn, dragging a hand roughly down his face to wake himself up.**

*Only Wei-ge would think sleep to be an inconvenience,* Wen Ning thought with amusement and worry. He remembers seeing Wuxian like this often at night within the Burial Mounds,

walking about exhausted, eyes struggling to remain open as he did his rounds and strengthened the wards surrounding the place.

It was unnecessary; Wen Ning constantly did perimeter checks because his body didn't need sleep. Or food, for that matter. Or air. He *is* technically dead, after all.

Master Wei used to strengthen the wards every single night.

*"Just in case,"* he'd say with a fatigued smile. *"It's become something of a habit, especially after the war. If I stopped, it just wouldn't feel right, and I wouldn't be able to sleep. Either way, I'm not getting any shut-eye, so best to use my time productively, right?"*

Wen Ning chances a glance at his master, a man who has done so much for others and yet never received the kindness he deserved in return.

Viewers balk in surprise at the Patriarch's thoughts. Wards? What wards? Most of the war veterans in the room don't remember there being any protective barriers around the camps which they could see or feel. None of the cultivators ever had enough strength or energy to hold up protective overnight barriers after fighting, training, and fearing unexpected attacks. The stress and exhaustion they went through daily wouldn't allow it.

How was the Yiling Patriarch able to do so?

Lan Wangji, Jiang Cheng and Zewu-Jun are also taken off guard. They were unaware of the additional measures of safety Wuxian personally put in place to ensure the camp was protected. They look over at the man in question, wondering why he never told anyone.

*He must not have trusted me,* think Zichen and Wanyin with shame.

*Why didn't he trust me?* Wonders Lan Zhan melancholically. Wei Ying knew that Wangji disagreed with his usage of demonic cultivation, but he would still go to Lan Zhan when it pertained to matters of war. Wangji remembers this well because those were among the few

rare moments Wei Ying would speak to him amicably. Or at least in a civil manner that didn't end in an argument.

*Even now , Lan Zhan realizes sorrowly, my Zhiji doesn't confide in me. I have truly failed as a husband and friend.*

**The Patriarch stops abruptly, and steps backwards, allowing the shadows of the two tents he hides between to cover his presence, brows furrowing in confusion.**

“Uhm, what’s he hiding from?” Questions Jingyi.

“Shut up and watch; it’ll probably tell us, idiot.”

“You know what, Mistress? I’ve had just about enough of your attitude, you-!”

“Jingyi. Jin Ling. Please,” pleads Sizhui with a hint of command. The younger two fall silent with a huff.

**The crunching sound of footsteps flattening dead grass can be heard before both the Demonic Cultivator and the viewers catch a glimpse of a tired-looking Jiang Wanyin walking to his tent.**

**Concerned silver eyes follow the Sect Leader until purple robes are no longer visible.**

(It is highly suggested that you listen to the following song either during or before you read the next parts. The song is: Army by Neoni.)

**The music streams through the screen with an echoey resonance as Wuxian steps out of his hiding spot. He sighs with a frown, gaze trained toward the tent Jiang Cheng entered. His voice reverberates through the room.**

Seeing monsters out your window;  
know you can't sleep, you pretend  
though. You don't have to play the  
hero.

*A-Ying, thinks Jiang Cheng, is a fucking hypocrite.*

**Wuxian turns away. With the flutter of his robes, the scene shifts into midday, where the camp is rowdy and somewhat anarchic. Cultivators rush out of their tents, preparing for battle. Wuxian walks out of his own tent with steadfast strides.**

**Jiang Wanyin ducks through the flaps of his tent just as Wuxian arrives at his side. The two share grave looks before the older nods almost imperceptibly, a silent agreement having been made.**

'Cause I got you like you got me.

**An explosion occurs in the distance, the sound of screaming and war cries accompanying it. The brothers head toward the chaos, expressions grave and intense.**

The viewers can't help but think they are an impressive and intimidating pair.

The juniors look at their seniors on screen with pride and awe.



When the earth shakes, when the  
bombs scream. 'Till our last breath,  
every heartbeat.

**They arrive at the war zone, and Jiang-Zongzhu immediately pulls Sandu out of its sheath and steps onto the sword, heading into the fray. Zidian crackles as it lets out dark amethyst sparks.**

**Wuxian, on the other hand, remains on the ground, treading within the throng of violence as he pulls Chenqing from his waist and twirls it carelessly. He side-steps attacks effortlessly, seeming absolutely unbothered by everything happening around him; face blank, but eyes hard.**

**He looks up and finds Wanyin battling against four Wen's in the sky; he's winning.**

You know I'll come running.

**Wuxian brings his flute to his lips as he forges onward. The first notes of the musical instrument escape and the ground beneath the Patriarch begins to shake almost immediately.**

If you go to war then I'm going with  
you!

**Fists and clawed undead hands burst at the Demonic Cultivator's heels. The sound of growling and screeching accompanies the trail of unearthing corpses. A terrifying hoard of unkillable zombies crawl out from the soil and blood-covered land, frothing at the mouth with the perpetual need for revenge.**

Fear, contempt, and disbelieving astonishment are among the many reactive gasps released by the audience.

Tales have been spun throughout the years of the Yiling Patriarch's demonic abilities, but now it is finally witnessed by the cultivation world what exactly Wuxian's capabilities entailed.

**The Yiling Laozu's silver eyes turn crimson red. He lowers his flute, twirling it in his right hand. He raises his empty hand to the height of his shoulder.**

I have no sword, yet, there's  
nothing I won't do!

Cultivators and non-cultivators alike are confused. Why does Wuxian not bring his sword into battle? It's quite foolish on his part and somewhat egotistical. Does he genuinely think himself so invincible that a sword is unneeded? How pompous!

Lan Xichen and the juniors are also confused but more in a concerned fashion. Yes, they were aware of Wuxian's might and prowess in demonic cultivation, but one of the first rules of cultivation is that your sword is your best weapon for self-defence.

If Jiang Cheng's meridians weren't sealed, sparks would be flying from Zidian, a tornado of emotions whirl within him chaotically.

Lan Zhan, on the other hand, outwardly remains emotionless; his facial expression giving nothing away as per usual. But as Wuxian noticed, his fists are curled into his robes tight enough that Wuxian fears the fabric might tear.

He subtly shifts, laying his hand soothingly upon the tensed one of his baobei. He feels the fist uncurl and turn over. Long, musician's fingers tangle between his own, grip strong yet somehow simultaneously gentle.

Wuxian then frowns at the large screen. Those particular lyrics are *much* too revealing. His weapons better not be doing what he thinks they're doing, or there will be consequences.

He doesn't care how strong of an emotional attachment he has with Suibian and Chenqing. If they betray his trust like that, he *will* destroy them.

**Wuxian snaps his fingers. In response, the Yiling Laozu's personal military *attacks*.**

**They are ruthless and horrifying in their violence, quite literally ripping and shredding the Wen's to pieces. Guttural screams of torment permeate the sky.**

When you sound the alarms and the  
chaos is rising; leading the charge,  
yeah, I'm coming out fighting!

**The Patriarch' strides are of the same speed and beat as the music; a sheer blanket of resentment exudes from his robes; from deep within himself.**

Swear on the breath that I breathe,  
I'll never retreat, yeah, I'll be  
your army!

**Once he's in the middle of the maelstrom, he stops and uses Chenqing, letting out a piercing whistle that penetrates through the sound of the surrounding battle.**

**The melody coming from the demonic weapon is chilling and turbulent, yet it is unquestionable that the flutist is of a professional skill level. His nimble fingers move up and down the instrument, expertly playing a complicated chord progression.**

Ar-Ar-Ar-Ar-Army!

**The undead cannot tire and, therefore, swiftly kill off the enemies surrounding their Master. Within moments, the Yiling Patriarch stands within the center of a linear spiral of Wen bodies.**

**The flute notes begin to pick up speed and grow more intense; as a result, the zombies work faster and become even more vicious. Beads of sweat collect on the Patriarch's temple, but other than that, there are no other physical signs of his fatigue. His army rakes through the skirmish, working from the center outwards.**

**The soldiers of the Sunshot Campaign soon realize what's occurring and move out of the way of the walking corpses.**

Yea, I'll be your army!

**The tormented cries of the Wen's mix with the delighted cheers of the Campaign cultivators.**

Ar-Ar-Ar-Ar-Army!

**Within minutes the battle is won.**

**The campaign soldiers celebrate their win; hugs, shoulder pats and whoops of joy occur amongst them. As they clear out, one or two Yunmeng cultivators that knew Wuxian before the war shyly ask him if he's alright. The Patriarch smiles and assures them he's fine. They nod and scurry away.**

**Jiang Wanyin approaches his brother. "Are you not coming?"**

**"I am, I am! I just have to put the dead to rest," Wuxian responds, gesturing at the bodies around them. "I need to reel back the resentment, so it doesn't stain the soil and turn the battleground into an entity or something."**

**"Why not let the Lan's deal with it?"**

**"Why let others clean up my mess?"**

**"So when it comes to others, *then* you'll clean up your messes," Wanyin scoffs.**

**Wuxian grins impishly. "I am nothing if not responsible and generous! How dare you imply otherwise, Jiang Cheng," he gasps dramatically, hand clutching the robes above his heart.**

The juniors giggle; Lan Zhan and Wen Ning smile softly while Wanyin rolls his eyes in amusement.

**Rolling his eyes, Jiang-Zongzhu steps onto Sandu. "Don't be late for dinner," he commands before flying away.**

**The moment the Sect Leader is far enough, Wuxian gasps out in pain; face paling drastically as he sways where he stands.**

Wei Ying's friends and family gasp in concern. As do some of the viewers. Why does the Patriarch seem so weak all of a sudden? He was perfectly fine a second ago!

They then collectively remember all the other moments during the previous viewings where Wuxian seemed outwardly healthy and yet was bleeding profusely under his robes from the whippings of the late Madame Yu.

Or other moments during the war where he was on the verge of passing out in his tent, but his voice did not so much as waver in pain.

Cultivators and non-cultivators alike glance over at the Yiling Laozu's table, wondering how anyone is able to know how the man is truly feeling if he hides his thoughts and emotions so well. Some add this new fact to their list of reasons to continue distrusting the Demonic cultivator. Others let it shake the foundation of their previous thoughts and beliefs of the man.

**He takes a few deep breaths, wiping away the blood seeping from his nose before playing Cleansing perfectly.**

The Lan's watching Wuxian are dumbfounded. How does he know how to play that song? And so well?

At the questioning looks thrown his way from the juniors and subtly from his husband, Wuxian grins mischievously.

"Come now, Lan Zhan! You didn't truly think I spent *all* my time goofing off when studying at Cloud Recesses when we were young, did you?"

He muffles a giggle at the embarrassed reddening of his ài ren's ears. He gently bumps his shoulder against the taller man before tipping forward to softly kiss the other man's cheek.

Jing Ling and Jingyi look away, embarrassed and slightly grossed out. Zizhen and Sizhui also avert their eyes but with small grins on their faces. Despite the various reactions, the juniors love seeing their seniors happy and in love with each other. Each silently hopes that someday they might find their home in another person as Hanguan-Jun and Wei Laoshi have.

**Once the bodies have buried themselves, and the resentment in the air is cleared to the best of Wuxian's abilities, he makes his way back to camp oh-so-slowly. His posture and**

**steps become steadier as he enters the camp, looking nothing like he did a second before: in pain and barely keeping himself from fainting.**

The adults seated at Wuxian's table look over at him with a mix of sadness and disapproval.

Wuxian decides ignorance is bliss and pretends he doesn't feel the heavy, disappointed looks sent his way. It's not like he can change what happened in the past.

It's not like he would've done anything differently if he was given the chance.

**Whispers of the Demon Patriarch's ruthlessness in the battle that just transpired follows him as he heads to his tent. He receives no thanks for his part in the fight. Instead, glares and the tightening of hands-on swords as he walks by are his reward.**

"The fuck?!" Cry Jingyi and Jin Ling in unison.

"Language," instinctively respond Wanyin and Xichen, although they both silently agree with the sentiments shared by the juniors.

"That doesn't make any sense! Wei Laoshi just saved all of their ungrateful butts!" Voices Ouyang Zizhen in hurt, confusion and anger. "What's *wrong* with them?"

*So many things*, Wen Ning silently remarks with equal amounts of rage and sorrow. Now that he sees it for himself, Wuxian truly was used as a weapon during the war. Single-handedly winning battles that should have been a group effort with his fellow soldiers at his side. And yet he was left to deal with it all alone, not to mention how dangerous it was for him to walk back to camp that weak and exhausted. Anyone could've hurt him when he was this vulnerable! And yet he hid it all so well; it hurts Wen Ning's unbeating heart.

**The scene then shifts to Wuxian walking through the woods on the outskirts of camp an undefined amount of days later. He hears the sound of the guqin and follows it. He hides behind a tree peering at Hanguang-Jun, who is serenely playing his instrument.**

**The infallible man looks tired. Wuxian's heart goes out to him. He misses their friendship but doesn't go to join him.**

Lan Wangji looks at his husband inquisitively, trying to hide his grief. He doesn't need to add to any more of Wei Ying's feelings of misplaced guilt.

"I was unaware of your presence then. Did you cloak yourself?"

Wuxian nods, eyes stuck on the sight of his beautiful, scarless Zhang fu. "You were never aware, but I secretly admired you quite a bit back then A-Zhan," Wei Ying divulges softly. "I loved watching you play," he turns to look at Wangji with a fond grin, "still do, obviously."

Hanguang-Jun cannot restrain himself from pressing a kiss to his Wei Ying's cheek; temple; chin; other cheek; nose; until the smaller man is pushing him away, cheeks tinted a beautiful rose and giggles escaping his soft lips.

"Get a room. I beg of you," laments Jin Ling.

"Oh hush," berates Zizhen, " *I* think they're adorable!"

"That's because you're a romantic fool," mutters Rulan under his breath.

When your nightmares turn to real  
life.

**The scene changes to a young Wuxian, in what seems to be his teenage years, watching a young Lan Wangji limping through the woods before him. The two boys walk with a procession of young cultivators. The colour of their robes displays that the hikers are a cluster of young masters from different Clans.**



“What’s going on?” Wonders aloud a non-cultivator.

“It was the Wen Indoctrination,” responds a member of the Nie Clan.

Nods and hums of understanding resonate within the room.

**Wuxian, eyes steady on Lan Wangji, frowns in worry.**

And the grounds filled up with land mines.

**The screen changes once more to the two boys standing on the edge of a deep pond inside the Xuanwu of Slaughter Cave.**

**Wuxian glances to the side to see Wangji’s determined and stoic face. A smile tugs at the younger boy’s lips.**

We will face it, standing side by side.

**The scene warps back to the war, where Hanguang-Jun is in battle, separated from his fellow soldiers. There seems to be a never-ending swarm of Wen enemies surrounding him. Every Wen the Lan strikes down, two more appear.**

The viewers are concerned for Hanguang-Jun, especially Lan Sizhui and the rest of the juniors. Although they, along with Lan Xichen, know for a fact that Lan Wangji is perfectly fine, seated with them at their shared table, they can't help but feel anxious and uneasy.

**Suddenly, a burst of resentful energy blasts through the battle, pushing those near Hanguang-Jun away. Wangji turns his head to see the Yiling Laozu.**

**Wuxian rakes over the other clinically, checking for injuries; he bears an emotionless expression. Finally, his eyes catch Hanguang-Jun's. They hold their gazes momentarily before Wuxian turns away to rejoin the fight.**

You know I'll come running. When you need, I'm coming. You know I'll come running.

Many cultivators that partook in the war are confused. Back then, it seemed like the Yiling Patriarch, and Hanguang-Jun despised each other. But the Patriarch's words seem to tell an alternate complex and ultimately very different story.

**Wuxian stops, looking up as swarms of sunshot campaign cultivators head onto their swords and fly up into the sky. His eyes follow Hanguang-Jun's robes as they head farther away until they're out of sight. He then continues walking in the opposite direction everyone else is headed.**

If you go to war then I'm going with you!

**He strides through the empty, abandoned camp and makes his way toward a hill a little ways behind the encampment.**

**He pulls out the Stygian Tiger Seal as he trudges along the uneven terrain.**

I have no sword, yet, there's nothing I won't do!

He gets to the top of the hill, where an army of Wens can be seen swiftly approaching.

*The screen fades, showing a flashback from a couple days before, where one of the lower leaders of the Campaign pokes his head out of a tent.*

*“Hey, Yiling Patriarch?” He calls quite rudely.*

*Wuxian pauses, head tilted with a raised brow. “Yes?” He responds lazily.*

*“Come here.” With that, the man disappears behind the fabric curtains of his quarters.*

*Wuxian releases an annoyed sigh, returning his attention to where he was headed, his Shiji’s tent. He tightens his hold on Chenqing and follows after the rude commanding officer.*

*Wuxian looks about the place, seemingly bored, but his eyes are sharp, and his stance is of a predator ready to attack at the slightest provocation.*

Lan Zhan and the other adults at the table realize then that even amongst fellow soldiers, Wuxian truly never felt safe.

Guilt gnaws at them.

*The older man points at a map on a table in the middle of the room. “An approaching army has been spotted three days away from this camp. Unfortunately, the size is too large*

*for us to go on the offensive, so we will be making a tactical retreat to another encampment that has requested backup.”*

*The man looks up at the younger, waiting for a nod of understanding. Wuxian simply stares at him impassively. It causes shivers to run up the other male’s spine.*

*“Anyway,” he continues, clearing his throat. “I received information from the previous encampment you were stationed at. They told me you possess a weapon that took down a full army without breaking a sweat. Is this true?”*

*Wuxian’s gaze turns to the map, seemingly ignoring his military superior. “Just get to the point. What is it you want me to do?”*

*“You will stay here while the rest of the camp moves out and keep the approaching army busy.”*

“What in the ever-loving FUCK?!!” To most people’s surprise, the enraged shout derived from Jiang-Zongzhu.

Wuxian wishes he had the ability to become one with his chair.

*“How big is the army?”*

“Why the fuck is that important A-Ying?!” Shouts Wanyin. “It’s an ARMY, not a few soldiers, a whole ARMY. THE FUCK?!?!?!? You should be saying NO, not acknowledging the idiot in front of you!”

The juniors nod in hesitant agreement, unsure what to make of Sect Leader Jiang’s sudden outburst. Jin Ling, on the other hand, nods emphatically with a proud grin. “You tell him, Jiujiu!”

***“How big was the one you stopped before?”***

***Wuxian peers up through his lashes. “Twice the amount of the men in this camp.”***

***“Good,” nods the older man. “The army approaching is five times larger.”***

Wuxian worries Wanyin might have forgotten how to breathe with how red his face has become. He can almost smell the sharp ozone of Zidian’s sparks, although he *knows* A-Cheng is unable to use it at the moment.

He keeps his gaze on the screen, trying his absolute hardest not to look toward the juniors or, worse, Lan Zhan.

Unlike everyone else, he remembers how this interaction ended, and he’s sure to be in a heap-load of trouble when the screening is over.

If looks could kill, his spiritual weapons would be nothing but dust.

***Wuxian strolls towards the officer and places his hands flat against the table, leaning his weight upon them. He inches forward; the soldier can’t help but feel like he’s being studied like a snake does a mouse before it goes for the kill.***

***“You are the right-hand to the true head of this campsite, are you not? Therefore, you fall under Zewu-Jun’s command, yes?”***

***“I answer to Lan hú, one of the elders of the Lan Clan-”***

***“Who ultimately answers to Zewu-Jun, as do all other Lan Clan soldiers. Correct?”***

***“...Yes. But what importance does that have on-”***

***“Is Zewu-Jun aware of the mission you are attempting to appoint upon me?”***

*I most certainly was not! Xichen wishes to shout his outrage similarly to Jiang Zongzhu but refrains, attention entirely focused on the screen.*

***“...No.”***

***Wuxian hums, showing no emotion of his thoughts on the response. The older man gulps uneasily, hand slowly inching toward the sword at his waist. Wuxian’s eyes catch sight of the action, and he leans back, swiftly turning away.***

***He exits the tent with a careless “I’ll take care of it.”***

“Wei. Wuxian.” The words are said with such eerie calmness Wei Ying is positive he’s going to get murdered by A-Cheng. Unfortunate, really. After all the progress they were making in mending their relationship.

Oh well.

He slowly slides his gaze over to his brother with a sheepish grin. “Yes, Chencheng?”

The juniors snort at the nickname. A-Cheng’s eyes narrow, looking anything but amused.

Wuxian is *so* dead.

None of the viewers knew that this happened during the war. Some question the integrity of the Sunshot soldier; how could someone ask a fellow soldier to go on a suicide mission so

carelessly? True, it was the Yiling Patriarch the man was asking, but still. There was no way that the commander could know that the Yiling Laozu would survive, and from what they've seen, it seems Wei Wuxian was a crucial tool in winning numerous battles.

Never mind how shameful it is to order such a thing without the express permission of your superiors! Naturally, quite a few audience members feel a sense of outrage for the Demonic cultivator, despite how they may wish to feel differently. But morals and values make a person, and no matter their thoughts on Wei Wuxian, what that commander asked was unacceptable!

Others, unfortunately, are of a different mind entirely. They agree that the commander's order was a tactically sound one. Knowing that the Yiling Patriarch held a powerful weapon that could easily decimate armies leads to the man's actions making perfect sense. Besides, after seeing the power of the Demonic cultivator, it stands to reason that he should be able to deal with any sized army. He'd done it before, countless times even.

Zewu-Jun, Lan Zhan, Wen Ning, and the juniors are horrified and devastated. Especially Lan Xichen. Zewu-Jun was one of the core leaders of the Sunshot Campaign, a man known for being fair and just on all accounts to any and everyone. Even his enemies faced fair retribution under his command.

Was he truly such a terribly ignorant person back then? Someone Wei Wuxian did not believe would choose his side if he brought up the atrocious order he'd received from a fellow soldier? Had Zewu-Jun failed the younger man farther back than he'd realized?

Just like the coward he is, he can't bear to spare a glance towards the younger man seated across from him. He doesn't deserve Wuxian's forgiveness, not after he's let the other man down time and time again.

Either way, in the end, Wuxian's mistrust turned out to be the right choice. After all, Zewu-Jun did partake in the siege that led to the younger cultivator's unjust death. The first Jade of Lan has never felt more utterly remorseful and ashamed.

Lan Zhan stares and stares at his Zhiji, wishing the younger man would turn and *look* at him. See the depths of his regret, his anger, his *love*.

He doesn't know how his Wei Ying faced so many injustices in his first life without raging against the cultivation world with more ferocity and frequency than he did. Wei Ying is an even stronger man than Lan Zhan realized.

He adores his *ǎi rén* so immensely he is unable to put it into words.

When you sound the alarms and the  
chaos is rising; leading the charge,  
yeah, I'm coming out fighting!

**Wei Wuxian surveys the now approaching Wen's, and his eyes turn blood-red. The Seal floats into the air, resentment oozing from it in waves.**

Swear on the breath that I breathe,  
I'll never retreat, yeah, I'll be  
your army!

**He lifts Chenqing to his lips and plays loud and fast. The seal bursts with energy, the force of it causing Wuxian to dig his heels into the ground in an attempt to keep from being blown away. Nevertheless, the powerful winds of resentment have him sliding back.**

**He takes a deep breath before beginning again with his flute, pushing against the resentment, and walking forwards until he is again at the top of the hill.**

**Ignoring the ache in his chest, most likely from the internal bleeding caused by trying to manage such a massive amount of energy in one go, Wuxian's resentment fog enters the Wen soldiers, killing them as they inhale the smoke. The process transforms them into an army of his own the moment their hearts stop beating.**



Ar-Ar-Ar-Ar-Army!

**Within minutes, the enemy's army has become the Yiling Patriarch's.**

In all honesty, the cultivation world was never truly aware of just *how powerful* the Yiling Patriarch had actually been.

As they watch acts of the past transpire on screen, the viewers collectively agree: It's fucking terrifying.

(Ah-ah, a-a-army!)

The juniors are hands down *amazed*.

“What in the world?! Can Wei Laoshi still do that now?” Asks Zizhen in awe.

“Yea!” Adds Jingyi, “how come we’ve never seen him do that?”

“Uh, maybe because he doesn't have the Stygian Seal anymore, dumbass.”

“Fuck you, Mistress Jin.”

(Yea, I'll be your army!)

Jiang Cheng's anger seeps away, momentarily replaced with absolute speechlessness in all forms. He looks over at Wuxian, as does Lan Zhan, and they are surprised by what they see.

Wei Ying looks like he's going to be sick.

The Demonic Cultivator is fucking *disgusted* with himself. All that power, all that death and destruction. *This* is the monster the cultivation world saw in him back then. He can now understand why they were so repulsed. He just performed a massacre like it was *nothing*.

It's no wonder they led a siege on him.

He should've been exterminated the *moment* the war came to an end.

Ar-Ar-Ar-Ar-Army !

**The landscape is covered with the dead, who stand haphazardly, slowly turning toward their new master. Wuxian lowers Chenqing with shaky hands, palm open to catch the Stygian Tiger Seal as it floats into his hold. The dead, even those without eyes, are focused on the Seal.**

**Wuxian stares at the atrocity he just performed.**

**[ *I'm going to be sick.* ]**

Viewers blink in surprise at the internal thoughts of the Yiling Laozu. They thought he'd be proud of the display of power he had just performed.

Those five words profoundly change many people's perception of the Demonic Cultivator.

The Juniors are no longer amazed; it's been swiftly replaced with concern and confusion. They thought Master Wei was badass. But seeing how pale and scared of...well, *himself* he looks, they rethink their original views.

Lan Zhan rubs his Laogong's back soothingly. There aren't any words Lan Zhan could possibly conjure up to soothe his Wei Ying's heart and spirit. Although forced upon him to accomplish by a world that never appreciated him, actions like these weigh heavy on a person's soul.

Wuxian remains rigid and tense in his seat, painfully swallowing down the bile threatening to escape him.

**He jolts in surprise as the army falls onto one knee, bowing to the wielder of the Seal. Wuxian looks down at the power he holds in the palm of his hands and feels a seeping feeling in his gut of complete and utter regret.**

**He doesn't want this power anymore.**

**[ *I just– I just want to go home.* ]**

Hearts shatter at how lost, despairing, and achingly *young* the man on screen sounds.

It reminds many that Wei Wuxian was hardly an adult during the war.

**The Yiling Patriarch falls to his knees as the adrenaline leaves him. Head woozy, he doesn't realize that his army falls with him, laying still and in a state of sleep, ready to be of use when their master calls for them once again.**

**With his nose and tear ducts bleeding, Wuxian begins hacking and wheezing; blood escaping his coughing mouth. He sways and falls onto his side, vision blurry, head pounding.**

Lan Zhan and Jiang Cheng's eyes widen in distress as they rake their minds to see if they can remember that battle. All they recall was the order to move to another camp that had requested aid. They, as well as many other soldiers, were unaware that they were, in fact, running away from a fight.

Despite how hard they try, neither man can remember seeing or talking to Wuxian after their forced relocation. So many events occurred during the war, many blurred or forgotten under the effects of emotional and physical trauma their bodies experienced. As a result, as is with many war veterans, the brain forcefully erased or pushed back memories so as not to relive them again. Consequently, it's impossible for them to remember everything, no matter how badly they wish they could.

At least they know for certain that Wuxian had returned to the war afterwards. But had he let himself heal before then? Or was he hiding even more injuries under his robes than either had previously thought possible?

The unknowns are copious, only increasing their anger, sadness, and ever-present guilt.

**The scene shifts to a year and a half later, with Wuxian standing, his back to a cluster of Dafan Wens, his front facing the Burial mounds with a grave, concentrated expression.**

If you go to war then I'm going with you.

**He lifts his hands and does some intricate finger and hand movements. Resentment seeps from his fingertips as he draws a symbol that creates a force field surrounding the perimeter.**

I have no sword, yet, there's nothing I won't do.

**He creates a small opening within the field and moves to the side, gesturing for the group to enter their new home with a small, tired smile.**

**Once everyone has entered, he turns back and closes the field.**

When you sound the alarms and the  
chaos is rising. Leading the charge,  
yeah, I'm coming out fighting.



**He moves backwards, shadows enveloping his clothes, making him one with the darkness.**

Swear on the breath that I breathe,  
I'll never retreat, yea, I'll be  
your army.

**A one-man army to protect the Dafan Wens.**

## Chapter End Notes

Once again, I'm so very sorry for the wait. I'm not entirely satisfied with this chapter, but felt like I had to give y'all something after you've waited so patiently. Thank you so much for your ongoing investment and support and happy late New Year!

I hope you continue to like this fic as it progresses. It always makes my day when I get to read your thoughts and reviews on the chapter in the comments. Your continuous investment in the story encourages my own! Thank you all so much!!!  

Let me know your thoughts on the chapter! I live for comments and reviews!

Also, if you want, share theories on what you think will happen next!

I hope you have a great day/night! ❤️❤️❤️

# Digging Into The Past Can Lead To Unsavory Discoveries

## Chapter Notes

Guess who's alive? 🙄 In honor of Wei Wuxian's Birthday, I have risen from the dead.

Enjoy this chapter which has been cut in 2 bcs it's a gigantic one and after 6 months you guys deserved a piece of this huge pie. This hasn't been edited bcs if I had it in my drafts for a second longer it wasn't going to get posted (it's been in my drafts since March 😊).

Once again, I don't think it's my best work, but y'all have waited so patiently so here you go:

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

Silence reigns within the large room while viewers take a moment to attempt to digest and process the quantity of information that has just been presented on screen.

So much has been revealed in the span of a few minutes, it's difficult for many to wrap their heads around it.

For starters, the relationship between the Yiling Patriarch and the revered Hanguang-Jun was much more complicated than most realized. There was less hate than expected, but not enough amiability to be deemed friends. Or, at least that's what most have concluded.

Then there's the whole situation with Wei Wuxian fighting an army by himself with all participants of the Sunshot Campaign being none the wiser. That particular scene didn't sit well with most of the spectators, nevertheless variance of opinion remains. Some are beginning to allow the happenings on screen to alter their beliefs of the infamous demonic cultivator, while others refuse to steer away from their set viewpoints.

So what if the Yiling Patriarch fought an army single-handedly? He could've easily declined the mission. Besides, if anything, the act demonstrated how sneaky he was. What with using such a powerful object without having the decency of giving it to his superiors. So many brave soldiers could've been saved if the man used the Stygian Tiger Seal more often during the war. The Patriarch was simply selfish, that's all there was to it.

If these unyielding folks were confronted with Wuxian's clear distress at his own capabilities as a counter-argument, they would sniff haughtily in disdain. This whole screening is a set-up, they'd argue; for every single person is trapped in the Demon's domain at the hands of his very own weaponry! What additional proof of evident bias is required? No! They shall not allow the workings of a fiend as evil as Wei Wuxian to brainwash them. They are esteemed cultivators and prideful commoners of the Cultivation World, they shall not be fooled!

Other viewers, on the other hand, are stuck. Part of them wish to continue hating the Demonic Cultivator. Regardless of all that has been shown, he's still killed and harmed so many, including his very own family. Who kills their supposed pseudo sibling and brother-in-law? Who purposefully decides to practice resentful energy when raised and trained to use honorable spiritual energy? There are so many born without golden cores who wish they could have the chance to utilize Yang energy, why be so discourteous?

Contrariwise, it has been made evident that there is much regarding Wei Wuxian that the world hasn't been made privy to. Perhaps the man had good reasonings behind the decisions and actions he took all those years ago? He did much for the Sunshot Campaign and, from what has been shown, didn't once ask for recognition or reward. Furthermore, his reaction to the destruction he caused when he went up against that army shook many to the core. If anything, that particular scene has caused many spectators to reevaluate their prior perceptions of Wei Wuxian.

However, that being said, the final scene of the screening has a similar effect, because ultimately, when it comes down to it, the Yiling Patriarch chose to align with the Wens. He chose the enemy over his own. Wei Wuxian kept repeating throughout the song that he was an army for Jiang-Zonghzu, Hanguang-Jun, and the numerous Sunshot Campaign participants. And yet, he still ended up a traitor. It confuses many. Why expend all that power and energy to fight a war just to end up siding with the Wen dogs? Where is the logic?

This also brings many to question the Demonic Cultivator's echoed statement of not having a sword. What did he mean by that? Those who took part in the Sunshot Campaign were well aware that Jiang-Zonghzu returned Suibian to its rightful owner once Wei Wuxian joined the war. It was made evident when the cousin of Jin Zixuan challenged Wuxian to a spar, but the man had refused. His reason was quite arrogant and triggered many into disliking him, but it wasn't a proper answer to why he *couldn't* use his sword.



Why lie about not having a weapon when the whole point of these displays is to show the truth? Bewilderment is not strong enough a word.

The members of Wuxian's table ponder similar thoughts, save for three: Jiang Cheng, Lan Zhan, and Wen Ning.

Wen Ning feels hardly more than sorrow for his close friend. It seems unfairness is all Wuxian has ever lived, and continues to suffer through, and he is immensely undeserving of it.

*Wei-Gongzi has given so much, I would go as far as to say **too much**, and never did he confess the pains and struggles he experienced. Nor did he rely on anyone.*

His brows weigh downwards in heartache and nostalgia. *It used to annoy Jiejie a great deal.*

The Ghost General shily flicks his eyes over to Hanguang-Jun. As usual, the other man shows barely any sign of emotion. However, thanks to the countless times he visited and spent time in Cloud Recesses, Wen Ning catches the deepened frown and glint of anguish in golden-yellow eyes. He can't help but wonder how much these viewings are hurting the Chief Cultivator. Wen Ning has witnessed the depth of Hanguang-Jun's love and care for Wei-Gongzi, this can't be easy for him.

And it's not.

Lan Zhan has officially had enough.

Enough of his beloved hiding his pain. Hiding his loneliness. Disguising fear and vulnerability behind displays of power. Throwing his own needs and wants aside for the benefit of others. It has to come to an end.

It will.

No longer shall Wangji idly stand by and allow his Wei Ying, his baobei—his *everything*—to suffer in silence.

From this point forward, his Zhiji must tell his husband when he is experiencing anything other than happiness. Even the slightest feeling of dissatisfaction or discomfort. Whether it be due to a mere papercut, or what his Wei Ying deems a “minor” stab wound, Lan Zhan *must* be informed without delay.

All this to say: no more of Wei Ying hiding or lying. At least not to *him*. Not when it is at the expense of his health, happiness and safety. Lan Zhan will tolerate it no longer.

Although unaware, Hanguang-Jun’s brother is of the same mindset.

Lan Huan has countless regrets, but perhaps his biggest one is failing Wei Wuxian, and by extension, Wangji. Wuxian was a, if not, *the* main source of happiness for his brother, and yet, instead of protecting Wuxian when Wangji could not, Huan directly contributed to the suffering and eventual demise of his didi’s most adored. He broke Wangji’s heart and trust in one fell swoop, and despite spending so long in seclusion, his continual state of contemplation, meditation, and self-reflection has yet to generate ways of amending his greatest failing.

To his complete surprise, it is the numerous screenings he’s viewed that have finally offered a plausible solution.

The common denominator that unites all who failed Wei Wuxian is a simple yet crucial act: that of *inaction*.

No one took action when it came to standing by Wuxian’s side. Not even Wangji, which is what shattered and tormented his didi for a prolonged period of thirteen, lengthy years.

It was immensely difficult to witness his didi in such a miserable state for so long. As a result, Lan Xichen vows never to allow a similar situation to arise again. He’s neglected his

brother for too long. As inadvertent as it might have been, it is still unacceptable. He shall bring such distasteful behavior to an end by being there for his didi and Wuxian in ways he should've been when he first discovered the Demonic Cultivator had returned from the dead. Or perhaps even further than that—when Wuxian came back from his three month-long disappearance during the war.

With a mental nod in self-affirmation, Xichen abruptly comes to a stand. The screech of his chair echoes in the silent room, causing all eyes to fall upon the venerated Zewu-Jun.

Jaws drop as the First Jade of Lan kowtows to the Yiling Patriarch.

No one is more astonished or confused than Wuxian himself.

No one, however, looks more furious than Lan Qiren. His fury heightens, face reddening in unbridled rage, with the feeling of a distinct stiffness binding his lips together. He scowls fiercely at his youngest nephew but Wangji doesn't spare his uncle a glance.

“I, Lan Huan—”

Gasps resound at the use of Zewu-Jun's formal name. It's considered an act of profound respect, vulnerability and, most significant of all, deference.

“—present my deepest and most earnest apologies to Wei Wuxian, husband of Chief Cultivator and Clan Head, Hanguang-Jun.”

Zewu-Jun raises his head but his body remains immobile. “There is no mass of words I could assemble to express the extent of remorse I have for failing you, not once, not twice, but countless times. Both before your death—”

Hanguang-Jun and Jiang-Zonghzu flinch.

“—and after your return. However, thanks to the handful of screenings I have been privileged enough to witness, I am able to express regret for a distinct handful of my failures.”

Wuxian's mouth opens, shuts, opens once more and then abruptly closes. He sends a puzzled and somewhat upset glare to Hanguang-Jun.

Squeezing his Baboei's hand, Wangji elects to somewhat ignore Wei Ying's discontent frown. Part of him feels guilt at silencing his beloved, but Wangji needs his Zhiji's attention to remain focused on the words of his gege.

All miss the knowing look Jiang-Zhongzhu sends to the younger Jade of Lan. Said Lan responds with a split-second glance, meeting the Clan leader's eyes before turning back to his prostrated brother.

Although it surprised him, Wangji can't say he isn't grateful and touched by his elder brother's actions.

“It is with utmost sincerity that I convey my heartfelt apology for the immeasurable pain and suffering you endured during the war,” Zewu-Jun continues. “I apologize for your sacrifices and struggles going unnoticed for so long, and that I, above all, was ignorant to your hardships.”

Wuxian's upset expression is paired with frantic headshaking.

“No, Wuxian, I implore you, allow me to continue. I need you to hear my words and understand that you are valued, respected and deserve to be acknowledged for all the good you did and for all you sacrificed. Furthermore, I am a selfish being in need of release from this guilt that weighs heavily upon my soul.”

Wuxian tries to swallow the lump in his throat and blink away the wetness pooling in his eyes.

Zewu-Jun takes the Demonic Cultivator's silence as his cue to continue. "I apologize for being a man you could not trust in times of need. Especially during the war. I did not properly fill the role I was bestowed as a main general of the Sunshot Campaign, and for that I am truly sorry."

"I apologize for being one of the many individuals who took advantage of your compassion and power. And, most noteworthy of all, I am incredibly remorseful for being a barricade in your attainment of my brother's requited love." His eyes flit over to Wangji, "I stood in the way of your happiness. Never will I do so again."

Lan Huan continues only after receiving an almost imperceptible nod from his didi.

"I hope to spend the rest of my life atoning for all I've done to harm you and my brother. I understand there is no excuse for my behavior, and I take full responsibility for my actions. I want you to know that I am committed to correcting my mistakes and working towards making things right."

This time, Zewu-Jun blatantly ignores Wuxian's head-shaking. Determination taking over his features. "As I kneel here, I also wish to relay to you my gratitude."

A quiet murmur circulates through the room, but is quickly silenced as Zewu-Jun carries on.

"I thank you for everything you did during the war. I am nothing but certain that those protective barriers you put in place saved countless lives. I thank you for the perseverance and bravery you displayed every time you used your powers to shift losing battles to our favor. I thank you for protecting my brother even when you were in discord with him."

Xichen elevates himself such that he is now in a genuflecting position. "I solemnly pledge to you my trust and protection. I hope that with time, you'll come to think of me as your brother in the same way Wangji does. I will do my best to be someone you can rely on when in need."

"Although I have no right, I insist, if not plead, that you come to me or Wangji the next time a member of the Lan Clan treats you with disrespect or practices behavior towards you that is

ill-befitting to someone of your standing.”

At Wuxian’s obvious confusion, Xichen clarifies, voice loud and clear for all to hear. “You are the husband of the Gusu Lan Clan Leader and Chief Cultivator. In political terms, you hold a status that places anyone else as your subordinate. No longer shall I allow or tolerate my fellow Clan members committing wrongdoings upon you. Enough is enough.”

The threat disguised as a statement hangs in the air. Zewu-Jun waits for Wanji to nod to him once more before coming to a stand and subsequently returning to his seat.

Wuxian is frozen due to a complex mix of emotions including shock, bewilderment, joy, resistance, guilt, sadness and gratitude. He is left speechless and it’s taking all he has to keep overwhelmed tears at bay.

He uses his strangling hold on Lan Zhan’s hand as an anchor keeping him afloat. He desperately hopes Zewu-Jun is able to see the profound gratefulness and appreciation swimming in his glistening silver eyes.

Most of the juniors have also been left teary-eyed after such a heartwarming public display. Their feelings regarding what transpired during the previous screening aren't as complex as those of the majority of the audience.

Of course they’re saddened and enraged by the neglect and injustices their Laoshi faced time and time again. But one of their main concerns is in regard to their favorite teacher’s use of resentful energy.

Unanimously, they wonder with not a minimal amount of worry: demonic cultivation doesn’t harm Wei-Laoshi’s body anymore like it did back then... *right* ???!!!

The question is on the tip of their tongues, but Lan Xichen’s words have left behind a quiet yet contemplative and emotional residue in the air. They’re a bit apprehensive of ruining it.

Jiang-Zongzhu, it seems, is not.

“A-Ying?”

Wuxian swallows, trying to reign in his disordered thoughts and emotions in order to give his brother his full attention. “...Yes?” He hides the surprise at being able to speak again.

Jiang Cheng’s face is blank, his expression could either be on the verge of amiability or rage, it’s really anyone’s guess.

“Let it be known that Zewu-Jun covered a wide range of topics on which I am in agreement with.”

“...I feel a But coming on.”

Jingyi can’t help the snort he releases. Jin Ling elbows him in the ribs.

“*However*, I must point out there is something he missed when listing your many attributes.”

Wuxian doesn’t like where this is going. “Oh?”

“Yes.”

Sandu Sengshou’s aloofness is rapidly replaced with the furrowing of his brows, the thinning of his lips and the darkening of his gaze. His violet-grey eyes, once distant and cold, become sharp and intense as they mold into a ferocious glare.

“You’re a *fucking* hypocrite.”

Wuxian blinks. He probably should've seen that coming.

“I don't have to play the hero? *ME* ?! That's rich coming from the great martyr himself! What's worse?! Not only did you decide *not* to tell your Clan leader and brother when you were injured during a goddamn *war*. But you deliberately *hid it*. You hid it not only from me, but from A-Jie!”

Wuxian flinches, eyes downturned in guilt.

“And let's not forget about the fucking ARMY YOU WENT UP AGAINST BY YOURSELF!”

Jiang Cheng's laid back position on his chair shifts as he leans forward. Fisted hands slam onto the table as his voice increases in sound, tone becoming more aggressive with each expletive. The abrupt change causes many to jump in surprise or flinch in fear.

It seems the rumors are true: hell hath no fury like Sandu Sengshou when angered.

“A WHOLE FUCKING *ARMY*, A-YING! WERE YOU INSANE?!”

Jiang-Zhonghzu's heavy breathing bounces off the walls, intermingled with the fading echoes of the shouting that preceded.

Silence takes hold.

It lasts a moment longer.

Then, finally: “Was that a rhetorical question?”



Zizhen smacks a hand against his forehead.

Jingyi lets out a groan and buries his face in his folded arms.

Lan Sizhui curls his shoulders in discomfort, muscles tensing and expression contorting in a visible grimace of embarrassment, and concern.

Jin Ling rolls his eyes skyward, as if the Gods could smack some sense into his Dajiu.

Jiang-Zhongzhu's responding reaction is nothing short of unexpected. His once rigid and tense posture seems to liquefy and collapse in on itself, as if all the anger that previously fueled him has been entirely sapped away.

In its place, a palpable sense of dejected resignation overtakes his countenance. It's as though the weight of the emotions that caused his initial outburst have finally caught up to him, leaving him drained and defeated.

The sight causes Wuxian to *ache*. A persistent throb of anguish courses through his being as he's struck with the realization that he has *once again* inflicted undue hurt upon his brother.

The sound of Madam Yu's voice echoes in his mind, a reliable if not constant reminder of the painful truth: Wuxian's sole talent lies in inflicting pain upon the very individuals he holds closest to his heart.

*Your unrivaled ability to cause suffering*, she'd once spat in a fit of rage about something or other, most likely regarding a fuck-up Wuxian can no longer remember, *continues to remain an ineradicable stain upon my life and that of my family!*

Years have passed since her tragic demise and his own death, yet he continues to bear such a detestable and cursed ability.

*What is it she always said? I'm nothing but walking misfortune? Guess she was right, as per usual.*

Wuxian is a creature devoid of the capacity or right to redemption. Even after death, his darkened soul remains plagued by a malevolent force of his own doing that continues to sap the joy and life from those around him.

His presence has always had a lasting effect, infecting others with despair and discontent. Despite the passing of thirteen years, it seems this trait hasn't diminished.

The cultivation world really should've killed him much sooner than they had planned.

It's abhorrent, really. The gruesome amount of power he had in his grasp and the amount of destruction he wrought. And for what? Vengeance? In the end, Jiang Yanli still ended up dead, her son an orphan, and her brother alone in a world he was much too young to navigate by himself. The Dafan Wens still lost their lives and Lan Zhan was punished by his own kin.

All of that because of *him*. Because of stupid, cursed, misfortunate, Wei Wuxian.

His family, and the world in general, truly would have been better off if he'd never made it out of the Burial Mounds.

Or, better yet, if he'd just died with his parents.

With a deep sigh, Wuxian reigns in his thoughts, attempting to put on an air of persuasiveness, voice soft yet firm. "A-Cheng...Zewu-Jun. You misunderstand."

Jiang Cheng's glare is dangerously daring while Lan Xichen looks disbelieving. Wuxian mentally shrugs, he's worked with worse and was still successful in convincing others that his words held truth. This time will be no different.

You see, the key, which his weapons have failed to mention, is that Wuxian always sprinkles some truth into everything he says.

Even the lies.

Especially the lies.

“Zewu-Jun” he begins, deciding to start with the easiest of the two, “I thank you for your kind words, but they are...misplaced. Despite how it may have seemed, most of my actions were selfish ones. I put those barriers up mostly because I wanted to keep my family safe, my mind was hardly ever focused on the war itself.”

*Most of the time, it was hardly focused at all.*

“Additionally, there’s really no need for you to feel guilty about that inconsequential meeting. It wasn’t that I didn’t have trust in you, it was more I felt there was no point in bothering you,” he meets A-Cheng’s furied gaze, “or anyone else for that matter”.

“Why?”

Wuxian barely refrains from wincing, yet turns to his beloved nonetheless. “Because I was ninety-five percent certain I could defeat the army without a problem. Therefore, it was pointless to bring it up for discussion. Besides, I knew you, Zewu-Jun, A-Cheng and...Jiang Yanli would’ve been against it despite how it solved a big problem within a short span of time.”

He turns back to Lan Huan, “You were ultimately successful in helping the other camp that required assistance, weren't you?”

Wuxian grins after receiving a hesitant if not entirely reluctant nod. He then responds in kind with a shrug that seems to say: ‘well, there you go’.

“It was between fifty-eight to seventy-five percent.”

The room goes deafeningly quiet. All eyes swivel to the flute spirit.

“That,” she asserts, arms crossed, body sprawled carelessly within her chair, eyes hard, “was the real success rate our Master had calculated when it came to his chance of defeating the army and not dying in the process. Between fifty-eight and seventy-five percent.”

Wuxian remains inhumanly still in hopes of eluding the heavy gazes he knows are focused upon him. He hardly dares to breathe. He can’t stomach seeing Lan Zhan, A-Cheng and Zewu-Jun’s looks of disappointment and betrayal.

Why won’t his weapons understand and allow his past personal acts to remain hidden where they belong? They, more than anyone, are aware that his words are woven in hopes of protecting those he loves from ugly truths. Truths only Wuxian’s soul should be forced to bear.

“And still,” Suibian adds, uncharacteristically serious, “he went through with it in hopes of bringing aid to a world that could not have cared less about him.” Although somber, his demeanor holds a tinge of silent rage, it reflects within the pool of his gaze, which rakes over the large audience.

“It took the end of the war for our Master to find a people that would see his actions for what they were and look at him with gratitude and love rather than hatred and fear.”

“You all referred to them as the enemy,” Chenqing states. “But to our Master, and a select other few, they were family.”

“Pay close attention,” the weapons order in unison, “for more truths shall be revealed and misunderstandings clarified.”

The ominous declaration dances in the air, and with it, the screen comes alive once again.

## Chapter End Notes

Thanks for all the support and patience, you are the kindest readers I could ever hope for. Your comments encouraged me to push through when writer's block was hitting hard. ❤️❤️❤️

I'll edit later on, if you catch any grammatical errors pretend you didn't. 😊😄

Let me know your thoughts on the chapter! I live for comments!!!! And reviews!!!

Also, if you want, share theories on what you think will happen next!

I hope you have a great day/night! Happy Halloween! 🎃🎃🎃

# Anyone Else—Anybody Else—Just Not Myself.

## Chapter Notes

Strap in folks, this is a long one. 😊❤️

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

**On the large screen stands a 12 year-old boy in Wen clothing, hidden behind a tree on the edge of a dense forest.**

“Uhhh, I feel like I know that kid,” remarks Jingyi, visibly confused, “and yet I know that’s impossible because by the time I was born, there weren’t any Wen’s left.”

Jin Ling wants to call his friend an idiot, but he’s feeling the same way; as does Zizhen.

“Why does he look so familiar?” Sizhui mutters.

**The child looks longingly at a group of children playing together a few meters away in a large clearing on the outskirts of Nightless City, they wear similar outfits to his.**

To everyone’s surprise, Wuxian turns to the Ghost General with a grin. “Shy since day one, huh, A-Ning,” he comments amusedly, but his eyes hold a tinge of sadness.

If Wen Ning could blush, he would. “Afraid so, Wei-ge,” he responds quietly.

The Juniors are speechless.

Until they aren’t.

“HUH?!” Exclaim Jingyi and Rulan simultaneously.

“That’s you, uncle Ning?!” Questions Sizhui.

“Ning-Laoshi was so small and cute!” Zizhen adds.

Wen Ning nods, feeling a tad bit overwhelmed. The juniors are an excitable bunch on the best of days; it’s currently taken new heights.

In addition, he hadn’t been expecting to see himself on the large screen, especially not as he once was: *Alive*.

He takes a moment to memorize the sight. It’s been a very very *very* long time. He’d practically forgotten what he used to look like.

The room is filled with mutters and conversations of confusion and intrigue. Not many remember or have seen what the fearsome Ghost General had been like all those years ago.

(It is highly suggested that you listen to the following song either during or before you read the next parts. The songs are best with headphones 😊 The song is: Waving Through A Window by Ben Platt.)

**The young boy sighs forlornly before starting to sing as music reverberates around the room.**

I've learned to maintain some space,  
before I've even turned to flee.  
Before I make the mistake: before I  
lead with the worst of me.

Wuxian frowns. For such a sweet and caring boy, A-Ning has always been overly self-conscious. Though he had good reason, from the stories Wuxian remembers being told, Qing-jie and Wen Ning were for the most part treated as outcasts by the Qishan Wens.

Another pair of kind souls unfairly mistreated by those who were meant to protect and defend them.

One would think, at some point, the world would grow tired of demonstrating to Wuxian how cruel it can be. He's *seen* it. Lived it. Time and time again. But it's never enough.

It's as if the universe wants everyone to know: this unfortunate one hasn't yet endured enough suffering.

With a heavy sigh, the demonic cultivator returns his attention to the large screen.

**Wen Ning turns away from the group, leaning dejectedly against the tree he remains hidden behind.**

Give them no reason to stare. No  
slipping up if you slip away.

**He walks away, head shaking and shoulders shrugging.**



So I got nothing to share. No, I got nothing to say~.

Frowning, A-Yuan leans against his Uncle's side. Wen Ning stiffens in surprise, but soon relaxes, lifting a hand to affectionately ruffle his nephew's hair in quiet thanks.

**The boy ventures further into the woods, coming across a small pond. He jumps precariously upon the stones that float within it, using them to get across.**

Step out, step out of the sun if you keep getting burned.

**He makes it to the other side. Sighing deeply, his eyes train up to the sky above, his hand shields them from the glare of heated rays.**

Step out, step out of the sun  
because you've learned, because  
you've learned~.

**The golden ball of light eventually dissipates, giving way to a blood-red and menacing Qishan Wen Clan symbol atop a billowing flag. The scene zooms out, showing an outdoor courtyard sequestered by a large, rectangular fence made up of dark stone and metal.**

**Numerous Wen flags are posted, one beside the other, forming a line of flags on each wall. The area is filled up with rows upon rows of Wen disciples in training, practicing sword movements and sparring.**

**The view expands once more to reveal Wen Ning creeping along one of the courtyard perimeter walls. As he approaches the entrance, he expertly conceals himself from the trainees' line of sight, only permitting his head to peek out.**

**His wide, awed eyes are trained upon the shiny swords being flung and thrust around, some haphazardly, others in proper formation. His gaze is yearning and focused.**

On the outside, always looking in.

**The scene shifts back to Wen Ning in the forest, he leans down and picks up a long, thick branch. He settles into a beginner stance, and thrusts the branch as if it were a sword. He practices some of the positions he's seen so many times before.**

**Move forward a step, twist, thrust, fake dodge, thrust again.**

Mutters of surprise spread through the room.

“You’re quite good, Ning-Laoshi,” Jin Ling mutters, cheeks tinting red at the bright smile he gets in return from the undead Wen. He pretends not to notice the amused expressions of his three friends.

**He gets into the swing of it, a fledgling of a smile blooming upon his lips.**

Wuxian feels both pride and guilt. He hadn't known Wen Ning wished to be a Cultivator.

If he had...well, there's no point thinking about it. In the end, A-Ning lost many things at the hands of the Yiling Patriarch.

Despite what he'd wanted for his friend, Wen Ning's dreams and wishes died with him. His resurrection might've given him life, but it also stripped him of the freedom and joys he'd

once had. Freedoms and joys Wuxian was never able to provide.

A forlorn sigh escapes the demonic cultivator. Just another failure to add upon his long, endless list.

**But then the sole of his shoe slips on a rock and he falls flat on his behind. The sudden fall triggers a coughing fit that leaves him breathless and shaky. Eyes clustered with tears brought on from the coughing and sheer frustration, Wen Ning flings the branch away.**

**[*Why was I born so weak? So useless?* ]**

The juniors gasp.

Wuxian's heart *breaks*.

**If only he had a strong constitution like the rest of them, maybe then he could become someone his uncle would be proud of. Someone who could protect his sister and their family, instead of being a burden upon them all. Just another thing for his Jiejie to worry about.**

Will I ever be more than I've always been?

**With shaky legs, he comes to a stand, shuffling over to a quiet stream a couple meters away. Kneeling, he gently pats the water with the tip of his forefinger, watching as it muddles his reflection.**

`Cause I'm tap, tap, tapping on the glass.

**As expected, his reflection wobbles around. Soon enough, his red nose and puffy-eyed face are replaced with the sight of what he perceives to be a better, stronger Wen Ning. He's a flurry of movements engaged in a sword fight against a faceless group of opponents. He's winning with awe-inspiring ease.**

I'm waving through a window~.

**The image becomes distorted once more until it's returned to that of a teary-eyed, pathetic Wen Ning. He wipes away the wetness before it can escape with his sleeve, and wishes with all his heart that he could be anyone else.**

“Oh, A-Ning,” Wuxian mumbles sorrowfully.

The audience has fallen into an uncharacteristic silence, seemingly caught in a whirlwind of emotions akin to what they felt at the sight of a younger version of the Yiling Patriarch. Some feel sadness and empathy for the child and the person Wen Ning became, while others only feel a smidge of sympathy for the boy but not for the adult that has taken his place.

**As he turns away from his reflection, the scene changes from a forested area to that of a busy meeting room. Wen Ning is only here to give support to his sister, who represents the Dafan Wen's during these monthly assemblies. They are held to allow the many Wen factions to speak to their Clan Head and update him on things he needs to know or to request items they require in order for his Clan to remain strong and influential.**

**As is typical, his sister tries to take a stand for their family, fearlessly ordering for an increase in food and resources.**

**And as usual, she's ignored, laughed at, and insulted.**

**For one thing, she's a woman, whatever she has to say they do not deem important. Secondly, the Dafan Wens are the weakest of all factions for they only specialize in medicine. They do not possess golden cores, and during the rare occasion when perhaps they do, the core is feeble and largely ineffective. Like Wen Ning's.**

Gasps echo around the room. Wen Ning slouches in his seat, wishing he had the ability to become invisible. He's not used to this much attention, it's overwhelming.

He chances a glance at Wei-ge and winces. Wuxian meets his gaze, tears glimmering within his silver eyes.

"I didn't know," he mouths, voice unable to release the strength of a mere whisper, lips quivering. "*I didn't know.*"

Fuck. If he had, he would've—so much could've—*shit!* Why didn't Wen Qing tell him? Why didn't A-Ning? A core is precious and special and instead of using it to help Wen Ning, Wuxian ended up unknowingly destroying it during the process of bringing the young Wen back to life.

He's as wretched as Wen Zhuliu.

He wants to throw up. To fall upon his knees and apologize. To yell and scream and cry and—*FUCK* Wen Qing should've told him, *why didn't she tell him?!*

**It's unfair. His Jiejie is intelligent, kind hearted, strong-willed and twice the metaphorical man these people could ever hope to be. And yet, simply because she can bear children and prefers to heal rather than harm, they deem her insignificant.**

Many hum in acknowledgement to the young Wen's thoughts concerning the apparent sexism being practiced. However, the murmurs abruptly fade as realization dawns upon them: not only are they inadvertently in agreement with a Wen Dog, but they're also displeased on behalf of the infamous Wen Qing—the Yiling Patriarch's mysterious Left Hand.

A mixture of embarrassment and internal anger brews beneath the surface of certain audience members, while others start to see the Ghost General—and by extension the deceased Dafan Wens—in a new light.

**Wen Ning knows things could be different, could even possibly be better, if only he would speak up in her stead and demand for what they are in desperate need of. Better blankets, more food, proper tools in order to continue farming and maintaining their homes. He already has an unfair advantage seeing as he's male. They'd listen to him. He doesn't know if they'd give him what he requests, but at the very least, they'd listen.**

Zizhen, completely captivated by the enthralling events unfolding on the screen, utters in a soft whisper, "You can do it." He remains oblivious to the melancholic smile his Wen-Laoshi subtly sends him.

**Taking a deep breath, Wen Ning tries to sike himself up. He curls his shaky hands into fists, attempting to ignore the heavy feeling weighing on his chest. Breathing is oddly difficult all of a sudden.**

**Trickles of sweat make a path from his temple down to his jaw as he practices what he'll say on repeat in his head.**

**He waits for a lull in conversation.**

**Licks his lips.**

**Opens his mouth.**

**...Nothing comes out.**

**Swallowing, he tries again.**

**...And once more, not a sound escapes him.**

**He has so much to say; heart filled with a multitude of thoughts and emotions—words that he wishes to express, pleas that he longs to make, and a raging desire to bring about change that will improve the quality of life for his family.**

**But no matter how hard he tries, he doesn't make a sound.**

**His shoulders fall dejectedly, eyes shifting to look at the shiny linoleum floor.**

Oh, I try to speak but nobody can hear.

**His reflected appearance is clearer than it was in the river, but as it did before, it changes to that of the Better Wen Ning. He steps up beside his sister, and takes charge of the room. Without fearing punishment, he commands that they give him what he desires, and they do. His sister looks at him, pride gleaming in her eyes.**

So I wait around for an answer to appear while I'm watch, watch, watching people pass.

**The fantasy blurs until Wen Ning's dejected reflection is back in place.**

I'm waving through a window~.

**Useless. If only he were better. Stronger.**

*[If only I were anyone else.]*

The youngest members seated at the table discreetly weep, their tears slipping down their cheeks without a sound. Even Jin Ling can't help the small snuffle which escapes him.

Wuxian, despite it all, doesn't shed a tear. Behind his barely stoic facade, a tempest of sorrow and conflicting emotions rage and wreak havoc upon what's left of his damaged heart. These tumultuous emotions, like hidden predators, lurk deep within a dark abyss Wuxian created at the tender age of seven. It's where he hides away the feelings he doesn't wish to confront or experience.

Wuxian possesses an acute understanding of the pain that consumed young Wen Ning. He loathes the fact his didi knows what that feels like. He loathes himself for taking so long to figure out A-Ning was hurting in such a way.

Can anybody see? Is anybody waving~  
back at me?

**The screen changes completely to a boy of similar height and age as Wen Ning. This one, however, has large silver eyes instead of blue ones. And his hair is much longer and darker in color. It flows down his back in a high ponytail held by a familiar red ribbon.**

“Awww, Wei-Laoshi was also very small and cute!” Exclaims Zizhen, trying to lighten the mood.

Wuxian, seeing his attempt, responds with a small grin. “Why thank you, my little duckling.”

**This young version of Wei Wuxian is hiding underneath one of the many piers within the residence of the Yunmeng Jiang Clan. He's waist-deep under a particular gazebo: the personal one of Madam Yu Ziyuan.**



As is common, she's in a heated argument with her husband. One Wei Ying is listening in on for currently unknown reasons.

That is, until it's become clear the type of vitriol Yu-Furen is spitting.

“I'm telling you Fengmian, if that boy makes a fool of our son one more time during training—!”

Jiang Cheng flinches. Wuxian winces. Lan Zhan's frown deepens.

“Ziyuan enough! You're too much—!”

“NO! *Enough* was when you found the little runt and took him off the streets. *Enough* was when you clothed him and fed him. *Too much* was when you decided, *without consulting your wife*, that you were going to adopt him into the family!”

Jiang Cheng resents the noise that spreads throughout the room.

“So the rumors were true, Jiang Furen truly did despise Wei Wuxian.”

“She's being a bit cruel towards a child, wouldn't you agree?”

“Will Jiang-Zhongzhu truly allow himself to be spoken to so disrespectfully?”

“It seems they're marriage really was as fragile as people thought it to be back then.”

“Jiang-Zhongzhu should heed his wife, he truly did too much for a commoner street rat.”

“Oh, poor boy. No matter how he turned out, no child deserves to hear such things said about them.”

“What nonsense do you speak? This is exactly the type of penance the Yiling Patriarch deserved. To think the death of Jiang Furen’s daughter and son-in-law would be at the hands of the boy she allowed into her home?! Wei Wuxian truly is the epitome of evil!”

**An exhausted sigh escapes the Clan leader. “But he isn’t. He is but a martial brother to A-Cheng and A-Li.”**

**“Because if not, he would have been the next in line for succession! Being Clan Head is Jiang Cheng’s rightful place! You would have let a beggar, a *street rat*, hold authority over your own flesh and blood!”**

Jiang Cheng's gaze shifts towards Wei Wuxian's countenance, and he is struck by the disquietingly vacant expression that adorns his features. It’s almost as if he’s forcing himself not to feel anything. It’s disconcertingly familiar, reminding Jiang Cheng too much of A-Ying after the war: oddly quiet, ridiculously inscrutable, and entirely unlike himself.

He hated it then. He hates it now. And although he shouldn't, he blames his parents.

In fact, sometimes, to his own horror and shame, Jiang Cheng *despises* his parents. It’s not something he cares to think about much.

Lan Zhan despises them as well, the difference being he feels no shame about it. Golden eyes seethe with rage at those who, by technicality alone, stand as his in-laws.

**“I’ve had enough of this conversation, Furen. We will speak of this another time.”**

**“Oh, of course, go off and run away from your problems!” Shouts Madam Yu, as her loud steps stomp after Jiang-Zongzhu. “It’s all you’ve ever been good at!”**

Lan Zhan grits his teeth, jaw aching. How *dare* they say such things about his beloved. The very thought that his sweet, kind-hearted Wei Ying had to suffer through such abominable comments at such a young age is beyond understanding.

To hear from the mouths of those who are supposed to love and protect you that you are nothing more than a burden, an insignificant blemish on their existence, is heartbreaking. The despicable behavior exhibited by these woefully inadequate individuals is a clear testament to their incompetence as parents.

What’s more, it's incredibly disheartening to see that even Jiang Fengmian, whom Wei Ying held in such high regard, did nothing against such abusive verbal attacks.

His silence practically condoned it.

**Once both sets of footsteps have faded away, Wuxian wades towards the shallower, sandy slopes of the river until he’s made it to dry land. He turns back to the gazebo and catches a glimpse of two shadowed adult figures moving in opposite directions from each other.**

**He lets out a deep sigh and turns away, trudging towards where he left Suibian, laying in the sun on the sand.**

We start with stars in our eyes.

**He rolls his eyes and punctuates his words with air quotes, his melodic tone dripping with sarcasm.**

We start believing that "we belong~".

**Picking up his sword, he pulls it slightly from its scabbard. The midday sun glints against the metal, reflecting frustrated and slightly pained silver irises.**

But every sun doesn't rise. And no one tells you where you went wrong~.

*Oh, We Ying, thinks Lan Zhan mournfully, you did nothing wrong.*

**He fully withdraws Suibian and steps onto it. Immediately, if not a bit recklessly, he floats straight up into the air.**

Step out, step out of the sun if you keep getting burned.

**With a suddenness that takes the viewers by surprise, Wuxian nosedives towards the water below at a dangerous velocity.**

Lan Zhan tenses in his seat, hand instinctively reaching over to squeeze his baobei's in reassurance of his safety.

Step out, step out of the sun because you've learned, because you've learned~!

**With the same swiftness as he began his descent, he levels himself out—Suibian now parallel to the waters below—and slows down to a leisurely pace.**

The young Yiling Patriarch's sword mastery is so impressive that even those in the audience who harbor reservations find themselves begrudgingly swept away by sheer awe of the young boy's skill.

On the outside, always looking in.  
Will I, ever be more than I've  
always been?

**Wuxian bends his knees to reach out and, as he sings, pats the surface of the water with the tips of his fingers.**

`Cause I'm tap, tap, tapping on the  
glass~.

**He stares at his warbled reflection, expression somewhat downcasted.**

Lan Zhan's heart is pierced by a pang of grief, and the juniors, observing the scene, knit their brows in visible concern.

Lan Zhan finds himself contemplating whether the broad smile Wei Ying wore during childhood was merely a facade, a mask meticulously worn to conceal such an underlying profound and yearning expression. As his gaze shifts towards his Heart, he can't help but question the authenticity of any of his beloved's youthful grins. His eyes sting at the thought they might've all been forced, and so he returns them to the screen.

Waving through a window~.

**He straightens up, his speed once more increasing, as he ascends sharply with little to no caution.**

Oh, I~ try to speak but nobody can hear.

**He jumps off Suibian, performing a quick flip mid-air before landing back on his sword with perfect accuracy.**

A collective gasp escapes the juniors as they fix their eyes on the screen in sheer awe. Wuxian, observing their evident delight and can't help but feel a smile tugging at the corner of his lips. Meanwhile, Lan Zhan's subtle furrowed brows reveal the stress he's trying to conceal.

He tightens his grip on his sweet husband's hand, a fond smile playing on his lips as he relishes the gentle squeeze he receives in response. Lan Zhan, his dear husband—always the worry-wart. Even for a version of himself lost to the past.

So I wait around for an answer to appear~.

**He zooms onwards, effortlessly executing [loop de loops](#), [barrel rolls](#) and a myriad of other tricks with ease, as though they're second nature to him.**

Jiang Cheng, his brows furrowed and arms tightly crossed over his chest, can feel the knot of worry tightening in his stomach. The sight of his brother performing such daring maneuvers triggers his Uncle Instincts, triggering a surge of parental protectiveness. While these stunts might have been thrilling to witness in their younger days, as an adult, Jiang Cheng

recognizes Wei Ying's display of aerial acrobatics for what they are: dangerous, needlessly risky, and ultimately unnecessary.

Across from him, Wen Ning's gaze follows Wei Wuxian's figure as he careens through the air with a reckless abandon that both amazes and terrifies. The wind tousles Wei Wuxian's hair as he executes daring maneuvers on his sword, a sight that would exhilarate anyone else. However, anxiety tightens Wen Ning's chest, his heart pounding in tandem with every twist and turn. He can't help but feel the weight of concern for his friend, worry etched across his undead features. He watches, powerless, hoping that Wei-ge lands safely from his seemingly exhilarating yet perilous dance in the sky.

Lan Huan, sitting tall and composed, exudes an air of silent distress. His normally polished demeanor is overshadowed by a troubled crease marking his forehead. His crystal-clear eyes dart from one aerial display to another, silently assessing the grave risks that these impulsive actions entailed. Every reckless twist and turn in the young disciple's flight across the screen sends tendrils of anxiety snaking through his calm exterior. A delicate frown etches across his usually serene expression, mirroring the invisible tether that binds his concern to the airborne Wei Wuxian. In the quietude of the room, the eldest Twin Jade's thoughts echo with the unspoken worry for the spirited youth dancing on the edge of danger.

In the room, a diverse array of cultivators displays varied reactions. A faction remains indifferent, exhibiting a complete lack of concern for Wei Wuxian's reckless aerial maneuvers.

Conversely, another group is palpably tense, their bodies coiled in suspense as they closely monitor each of his daring moves. Notably, a subset of cultivators even wears expressions of genuine concern, their focus entirely absorbed by the unfolding spectacle of Wei Wuxian's audacious acrobatics.

Meanwhile, the juniors observe with wide-eyed fascination, viewing Wei Wuxian's aerial feats as the epitome of coolness. Enthusiastically, they yearn to master these maneuvers, albeit solely for combat purposes of course...Or at least that's what they'd say if asked. In reality, their eagerness is evident as they contemplate the prospect of learning these skills, their intentions lighthearted and driven by the desire for playful and exciting games of chase.

**From way up high Wuxian can see the bustling streets full of vendors and tourists within Lotus Pier. He catches sight of a small family holding hands, a mother, a father**

**and their laughing, boisterous son, being swung between them.**

While I'm watch, watch, watching  
people pass~.

**Something deep, aching, and oh-so familiar squeezes at his heart. He turns, veering away from civilization.**

Waving through a window~!

**He slows once again as he makes it to the edge of the forest on the other side of Lotus Pier. He jumps off Suibian at a height he probably shouldn't, and his ankle only slightly twinges as his feet touch the ground.**

Lan Zhan frowns and Wuxian wants to reach up and thumb away the wrinkles marring his jade-skin brows.

Can anybody see? Is anybody waving~?

**The young boy strides into the woods as he slides his sword back into its scabbard and places it at his hip. His steps are confident, like he knows exactly where he's going.**

**Turns out his destination is a humongous tree, with large, thick branches that grow in all different directions.**

Jiang Cheng's heart tightens as he gazes at the screen—a wave of recognition washes over him. That was the very tree where A-Ying sought refuge when he first arrived at Lotus Pier years ago. Memories surge, vivid and poignant. Back then, Jiang Cheng had chased the



young raven-haired boy away in a fit of anger, blaming him for the disappearance of his beloved dogs.

His throat tightens in nostalgia at the memory of the way that night ended—with tearful apologies, warm hugs from Jijie and the taste of her delicious soup.

**With a determined expression set to his young features, Wuxian moves towards it with the sole intention of climbing this monstrous, natural creation.**

**He begins the climb.**

When you're falling in a forest, and there's nobody around, do you ever really crash or even make a sound?

**The screen splits; one side continuously displays Wuxian, while the other presents Wen Ning once again in the forest the screening had begun with. Like the young Jiang Head Disciple, he's also making his way to a huge tree, but with the simpler intention of basking in the shade it provides.**

When you're falling in a forest, and there's nobody around, do you ever really crash or even make a sound?

**Wuxian's small feet slip momentarily, before he regains traction and continues his ascent. His voice, now even more saturated with emotion, resonates through the air.**

Gasps escape from the onlookers, and a palpable sense of extreme concern grips everyone seated at Wei Wuxian's table, save for Lan Qiren, whose mouth remains firmly sealed,

courtesy of Lan Zhan.

When you're falling in a forest, and there's nobody around, do you ever really crash or even make a sound?

**Wen Ning makes it to the large tree and slumps against its trunk. His gaze rises to observe the intricate patterns of branches, leaves, flowers, and pinecones that make up the foliage of his favorite hiding spot in the whole wide world.**

When you're falling in a forest, and there's nobody around, do you ever really crash or even make a sound?

**Wuxian makes it to the top of the tree, and stands upon the unsteady branch. The wind causes his hair to flow chaotically behind him as he watches the sun set.**

Wuxian's expression of melancholy, combined with his nonchalant disregard for the precarious perch, heightens Lan Zhan's unease and tugs at his heart. Unbeknownst to him, Jiang Zongzhu also tenses in response, mirroring the subtle undercurrents of shared discomfort and worry.

**Voice straining with emotion, he sings to the setting sun.**

Did I even make a sound?

**Wen Ning sings to the large and lonely forest around him, the descending sun casting various colors of light upon his special spot.**

Did I even make a sound?

Tears shine in Wuxian's eyes.

He imagines what could've happened if he left his hiding spot under the gazebo sooner.

If he'd apologized to Madame Yu—explained to her it was never his intention to take anything away from anyone—would she have calmed down?

All he'd ever wanted was a home, and now he's gotten one and he's so *so* grateful. He's displayed his gratitude at her feet countless times before. He's also thanked Uncle Jiang too many times to count for everything they've granted him which he went without for so long.

He apologizes every time he does something that displeases Madame Yu. *Every. Single. Time.*

And he never complains when she delivers punishments. Or at least he tries not to. Sometimes the whip hurts too much and he can't help it if a cry escapes him. And when it happens he apologizes again.

Why doesn't she hear him?

Why doesn't she understand?

Why can't *he* be better?

*[If only I were anyone else.]*

# **It's like I never made a sound.**

Jiang Cheng's heart sinks as he witnesses tears shimmering in little A-Ying's eyes. The pain etched across his brother's face reveals a depth of suffering Jiang Cheng hadn't known existed. In their younger years, Wuxian would nonchalantly brush off their mother's comments, leaving Jiang Cheng oblivious to the profound hurt lurking beneath the surface.

As the young Wuxian reflects on a cascade of apologies and unspoken struggles, Jiang Cheng grapples with a rising sense of guilt. He hadn't comprehended the true extent of his brother's pain—expressed gratitude, countless apologies, and endured punishments, all hidden behind a facade of resilience.

The weight of regret settles heavily upon Jiang Cheng as he realizes the magnitude of A-Ying's silent battles. He wishes he had seen the signs, understood the unspoken cries for help. Observing his brother's internal turmoil stirs a deep well of reflection within the Clan Head, a poignant remorse for not recognizing and addressing the hurt sooner.

Lan Zhan, on the other hand, feels rage mixed in with his sorrow. The repeated apologies that punctuate Wei Ying's thoughts cut through his heart. The image of his beloved apologizing for every perceived transgression, and enduring punishments with silent acceptance, leaves the Chief Cultivator grappling with the injustice of it all.

The realization that his sweet Zhiji had yearned for a home, only to face a painful childhood, tugs at his breaking heart. The frustration and confusion his Airen experienced strikes a chord, as Lan Zhan grapples with the helplessness of not being able to change the past.

The desperate plea, resonating with the poignant comment—"If only I were anyone else."—inflicts a piercing ache in his heart. The profound anguish of realizing that Wei Ying yearned for an alternate identity to evade the torment of his home life cuts deeply

Once again, silent tears stream down the faces of the juniors, their anguish palpable in the air. Jin Ling, caught in the grip of conflicting emotions, experiences a surge of guilt and a burgeoning resentment towards his grandparents for their actions and treatment of his Dajiu.

The weight of the scene settles heavily on his shoulders as he navigates the complex web of emotions, torn between familial loyalty and the harsh reality of his elders' behavior towards someone he cares about deeply.

Amid the palpable sorrow, Lan Sizhui's usually kind heart and innocent soul stands unaffected by guilt. Instead, a profound sorrow washes over him as he witnesses the pain his Baba endured as a child. At the same time, an undercurrent of anger simmers beneath the surface, directed towards those entrusted with his Baba's guardianship but failed miserably in their duties.

**Wen Ning's gaze turns to the grass, resignedly.**

**Why couldn't he have been born more like A-Jie? Why must he be cursed with a weak constitution and an even weaker backbone?**

**It's not as if he doesn't try to do better, to be better. He does! But nothing ever comes of it.**

**It seems he'll forever be stuck as the nobody Dafan-Boy. The child born with a defective golden core and an overall incompetence.**

**If only he were anyone else.**

Wei Wuxian winces inwardly in recognition of Wen Ning's internal struggles. The resigned gaze and the weight of self-doubt hits hard. There's an ache in his chest at his didi's frustration, the longing for a different fate, and the sincere efforts to be better. The words about a defective golden core and overall incompetence resonate painfully.

The thought of Wen Ning being trapped as the 'nobody Dafan-Boy' evokes a deep sense of empathy. The intense desire to be someone else reverberates and an urge to relieve his friend's burden emerges. A deep sorrow washes over Wuxian as he hears Wen Ning share his twin yearning to escape from the shadows of inadequacy. It's a dreadful place to find oneself; a place Wuxian knows all too well.

Will I ever make a sound?

**Wen Ning wraps his arms around his knees and draws them to his chest. He rests his face against them. Hiding away.**

The onlookers among the cultivators respond in a variety of ways. Some, observing the vulnerability in the now-monstrous figure, feel a surge of sympathy for the young boy on screen. They see beyond the menacing presence the child has become to the wounded soul seeking solace, and a genuine compassion stirs within them.

However, not all reactions are marked by empathy. For some cultivators, the knowledge and memories of the atrocities associated with Wen Ning's past overshadows the current display of vulnerability. Despite witnessing his pain, they find it challenging to separate the person before them from the monstrous deeds committed in the name of the Yiling Patriarch. A conflicted mix of emotions tugs at them—awareness of his suffering alongside the haunting image of the monster he grew up to be.

On the other end of the spectrum, there are those who remain unmoved, unable or unwilling to perceive anything beyond the label of 'monster.' To them, Wen Ning's vulnerability is inconsequential, eclipsed by the indelible image of the threat he once represented and still presents to this day. The scene elicits no sympathy from this faction, only a stark reminder of the fearsome reputation that precedes the Ghost General.

On the outside, always looking in—!

—Will I ever be more than I've always been?

`Cause I'm tap, tap, tapping on the glass~!

**Wuxian pulls his red ribbon from his hair, freeing his billowing locks to dance in the breeze. He fiddles with the reddened silk and thinks back on the boy he used to be. The child that lived with a Mama and a Baba that loved him.**

**He tries not to think too hard on the fact that he's having trouble remembering who any of them were. Both his parents and that little, carefree kid he once was.**

Jiang Cheng's gaze tightens with a mixture of concern, sorrow, and that ever-present anger he inherited from his mother. He senses the weight of Wuxian's thoughts, the struggle to recall a time when they were carefree children with loving parents. It hits Jiang Cheng, then and there; the sudden realization dawns upon him that it's a memory he can't recall because it's not one he's ever had the privilege of experiencing.

The weight of that absence settles heavily upon his shoulders, and a somber acknowledgment forms in his mind. He contemplates the depth of A-Ying's loss, realizing that it must be even more agonizing to have tasted the sweetness of such familial bonds only to have them cruelly taken away.

In this moment, Jiang Cheng understands the profound truth that sometimes, the ache of a lost joy can be more agonizing than never having known it at all.

While Sandu Shengshou reflects upon these thoughts, Lan Zhan's usually composed exterior softens with sympathy at his young baobei on the screen. A pang of understanding resonates within at his Wei Ying's grief-filled reminiscence. His thoughts drift to his own memories, particularly those of his mother. The numerous paintings of her he has hidden away in Cloud Recesses, silent witnesses to a love that transcends time, hang in the recesses of his mind.

A quiet ache stirs within him at the realization that Wuxian lacks the tangible artifacts that Lan Zhan himself possesses. His heart reaches out to his Wei Ying, recognizing the void left by the absence of physical mementos. He longs to offer solace in the face of such intangible loss.

Waving through a window! Oh, I~ try to speak, but nobody can hear.

**As the sky darkens, Wen Ning begrudgingly pulls himself up and begins the slow trek back home.**

**He deliberately avoids looking down as he passes the small creek, and he pretends not to notice the large branch he'd hurled away in rage.**

So I wait around for an answer to appear while I'm watch, watch, watching people pass~.

**Wuxian turns his face to the right. In reality, he's looking down at the vast forest that stretches across a tree-clad landscape. On the screen however, it is as if he's looking at Wen Ning.**

Waving through a window~!

**Wen Ning turns his head to the left, his gaze is focused on the lights of Nightless City, which are visible to him from where he's standing. But once more, it appears as though he's looking back at Wei Wuxian.**

Can anybody see?

**To the viewers it looks like the boys are singing to each other.**



Is anybody waving back at me~? Is anybody waving?

**The screen changes entirely, this time fast forwarding to three years later. The location and setting is that of the Qishan Wen Clan Discussion Conference. Or at least the outskirts of it, where an unlikely pair cross paths.**

**“Hey, nice archery skills!”**

**“Oh...uh, thank you Gongzi,” comes the shy and quiet response. “My apologies for almost...”**

**“Skewering me?” The older boy chuckles. “Don’t worry about it! Happens more than you’d think. Oh, don’t look so worried! I’m the Head Disciple of the Yunmeng Jiang Clan, I train the younger disciples in the art of archery. It comes with the territory.”**

Waving! Waving!

**“I’m Wei Wuxian, by the way. But you can call me Wei Ying!”**

**“I am Wen Qionglin...or, uhm, Wen Ning.”**

Woah-oh~, whoa-oh-oh-oh!

**“It’s nice to meet you! I hope to see you in the competition!”**

**“It was nice meeting you as well.”**

**And just like that, a friendship was born between two kindred spirits.**

**A friendship that would alter both boys’ futures in the years to come.**

## Chapter End Notes

If you would, think of Suibian like a car. Wuxian is basically practicing reckless driving...on purpose.

Once again, I am so sorry for the long wait. I am beyond grateful for your patience and continued interest in this story. It doesn’t matter how many times I say it, I will always mean it from the bottom of my heart: Thank you, and I truly appreciate you.

This chapter was the opening to what many of you are looking forward to: the Dafan Wen arc! Hopefully it’ll meet some of your expectations.

For all of your amazing and kindhearted comments, here’s a snippet of a lyric which is taken from the song that’ll be used in the next chapter:

“The truth is I’m demonized for standing my own ground. So you pushed me to the deep end, hoping I’d drown.”

Can you guess what song it is? Let me know your guesses in the comment section! (You can cheat with Google 😊)

As always, hope you have a great day/night! And happy late new year!!! ❤️❤️❤️🎆🎆



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